VIZ PREMIERE COMICS
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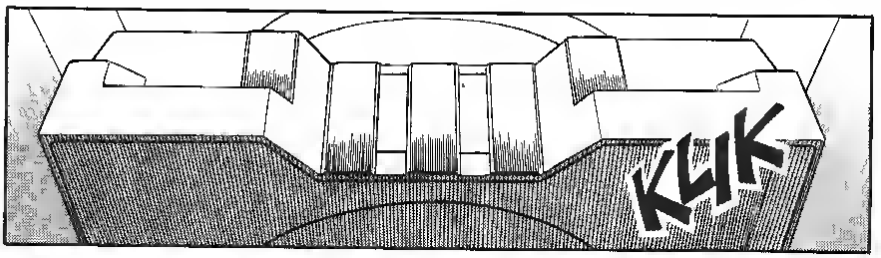
STARTOO2

NO. 2

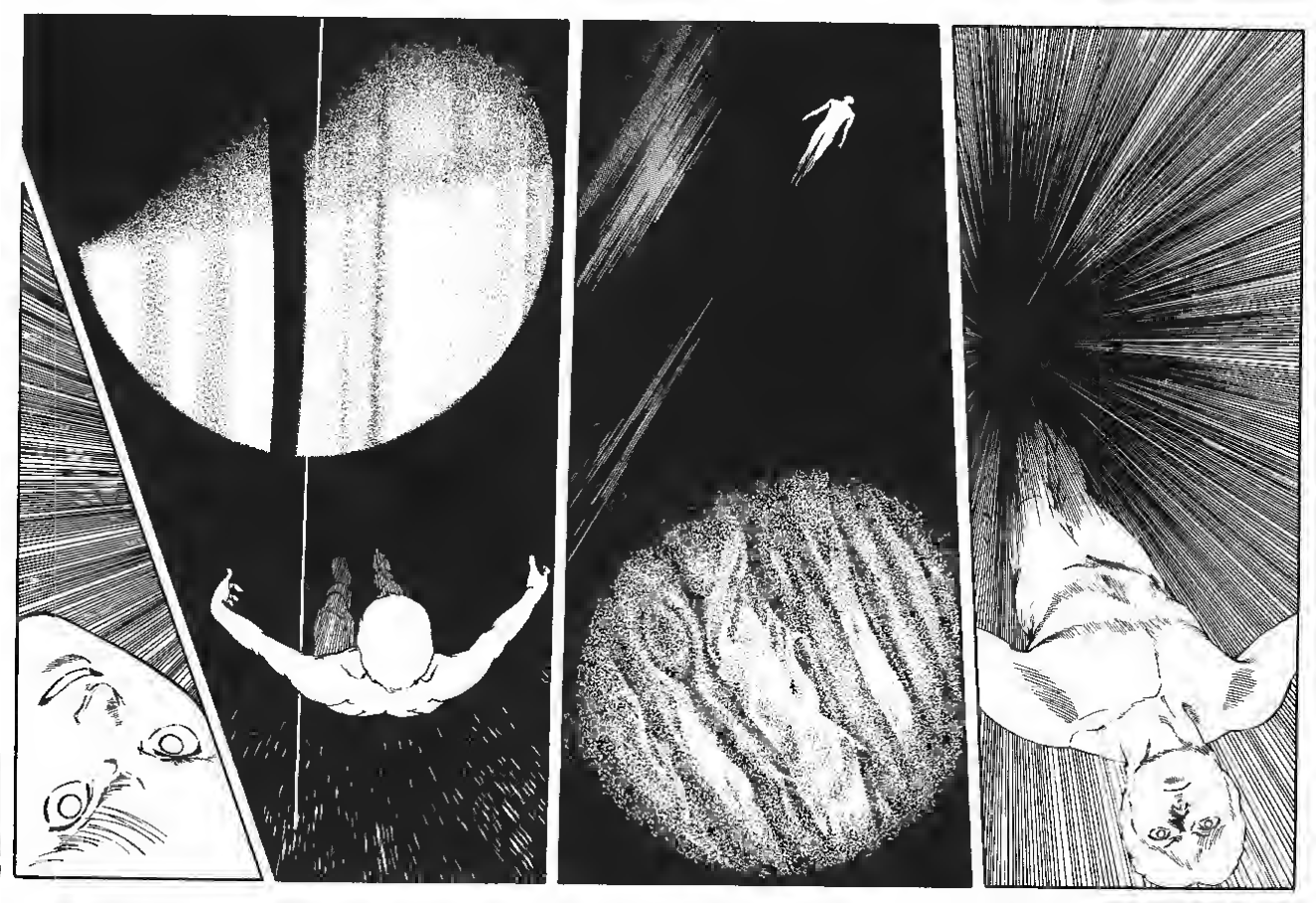
Story and Art by

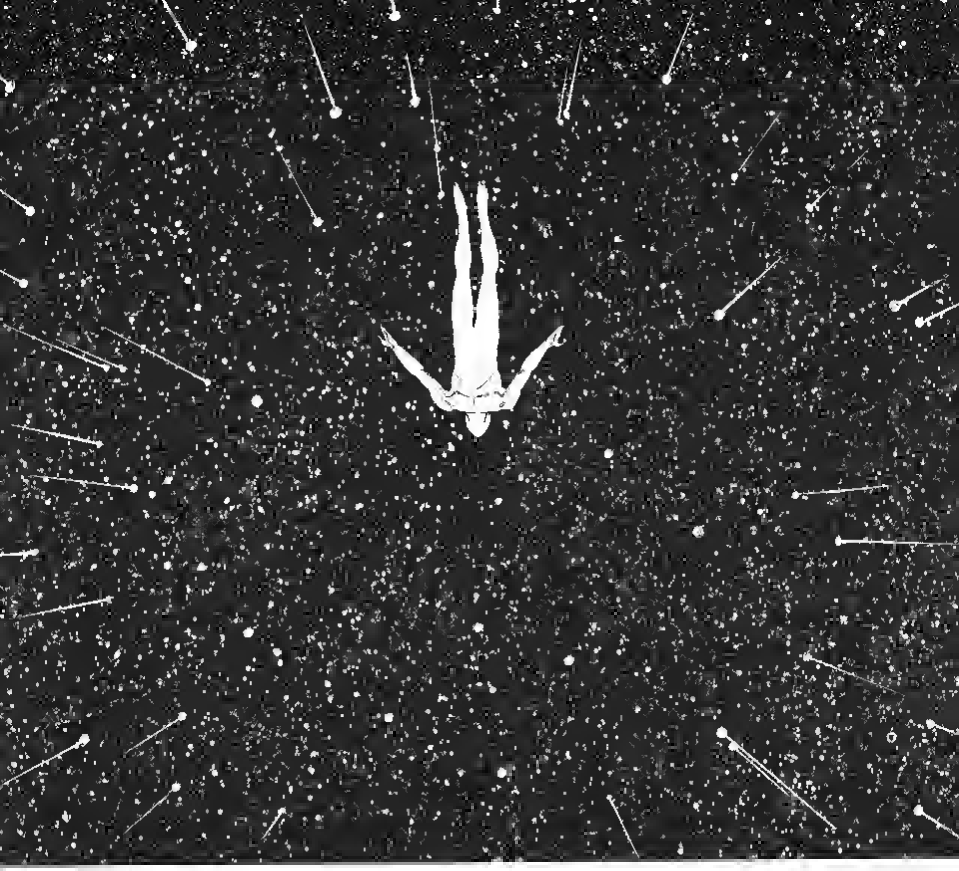
YUKINOBU HOSHINO

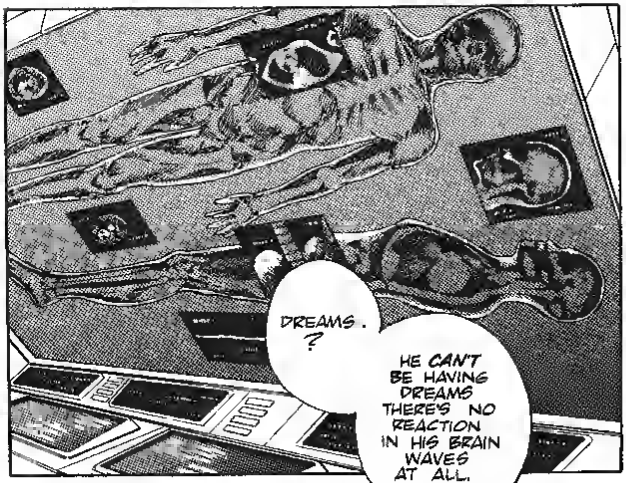
Night 5: RENDEZVOUS

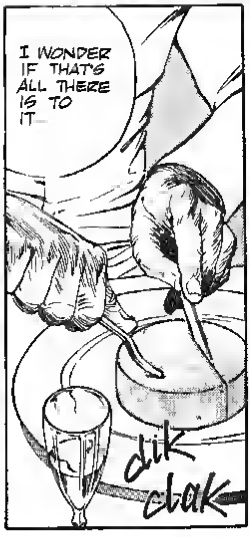


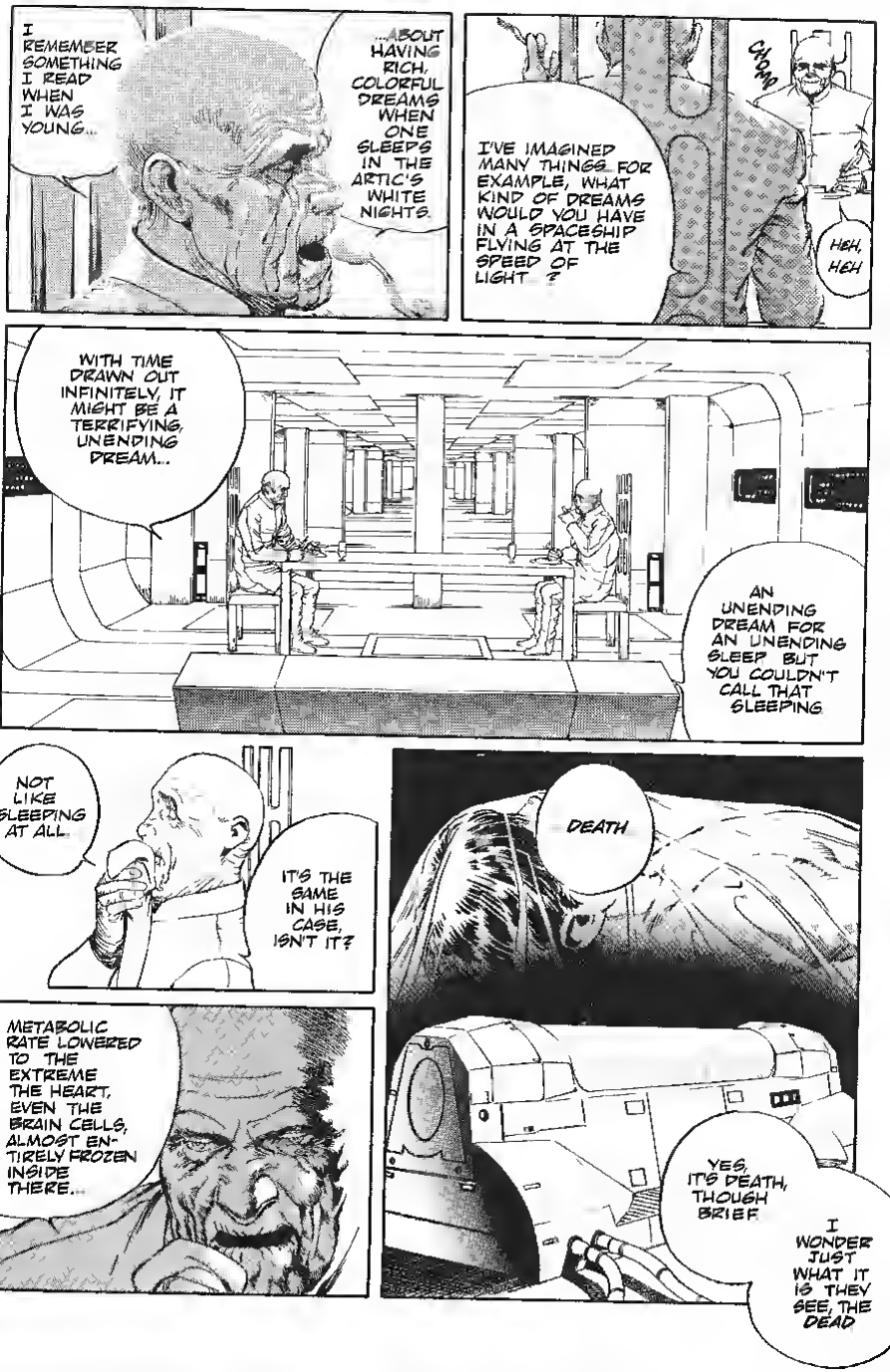
COLD...
SO COLD
IT'S COLD, MAMA IT'S COLD
COLD

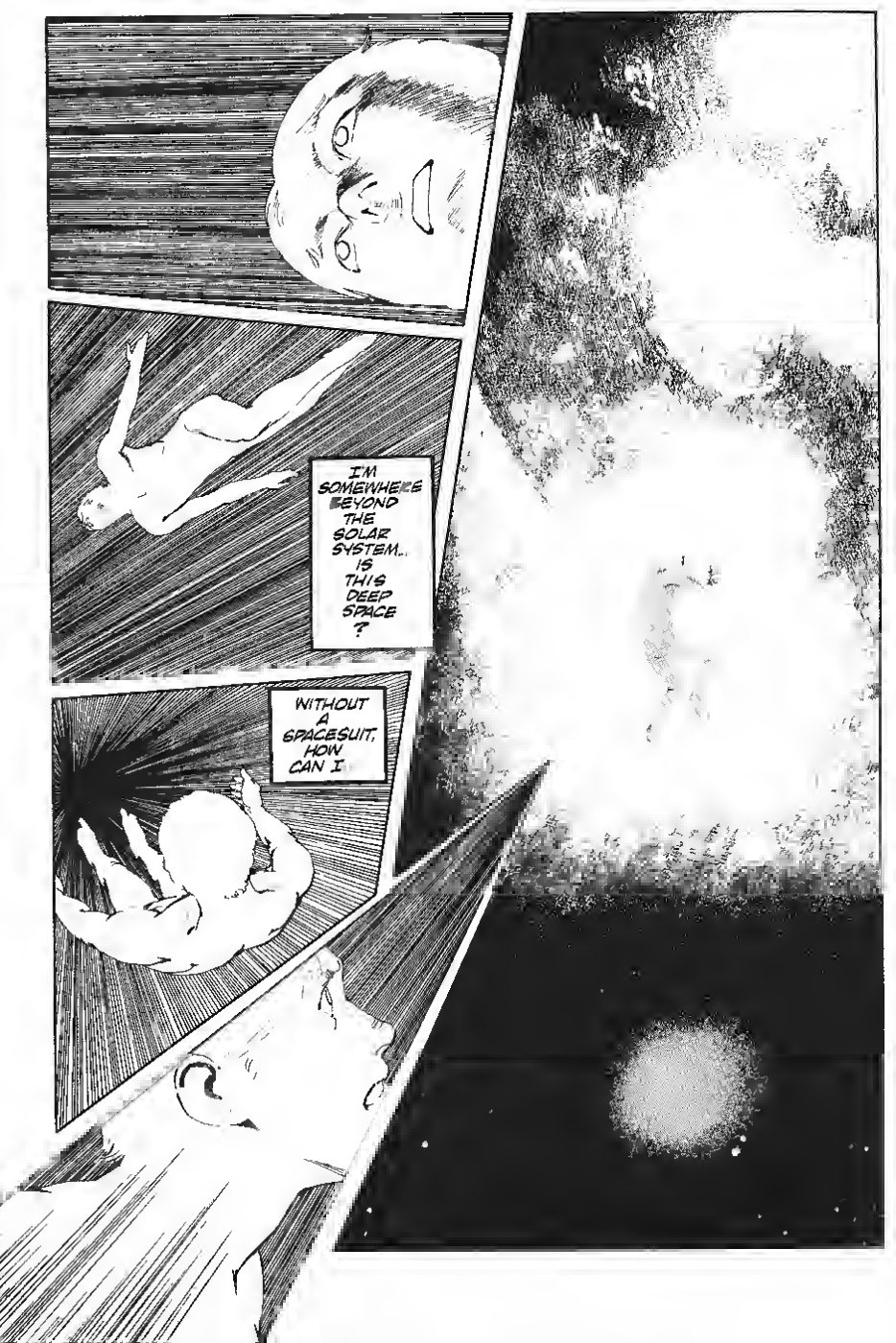





DREAMS. ?
HE CAN'T BE HAVING DREAMS THERE'S NO REACTION IN HIS BRAIN WAVES AT ALL.

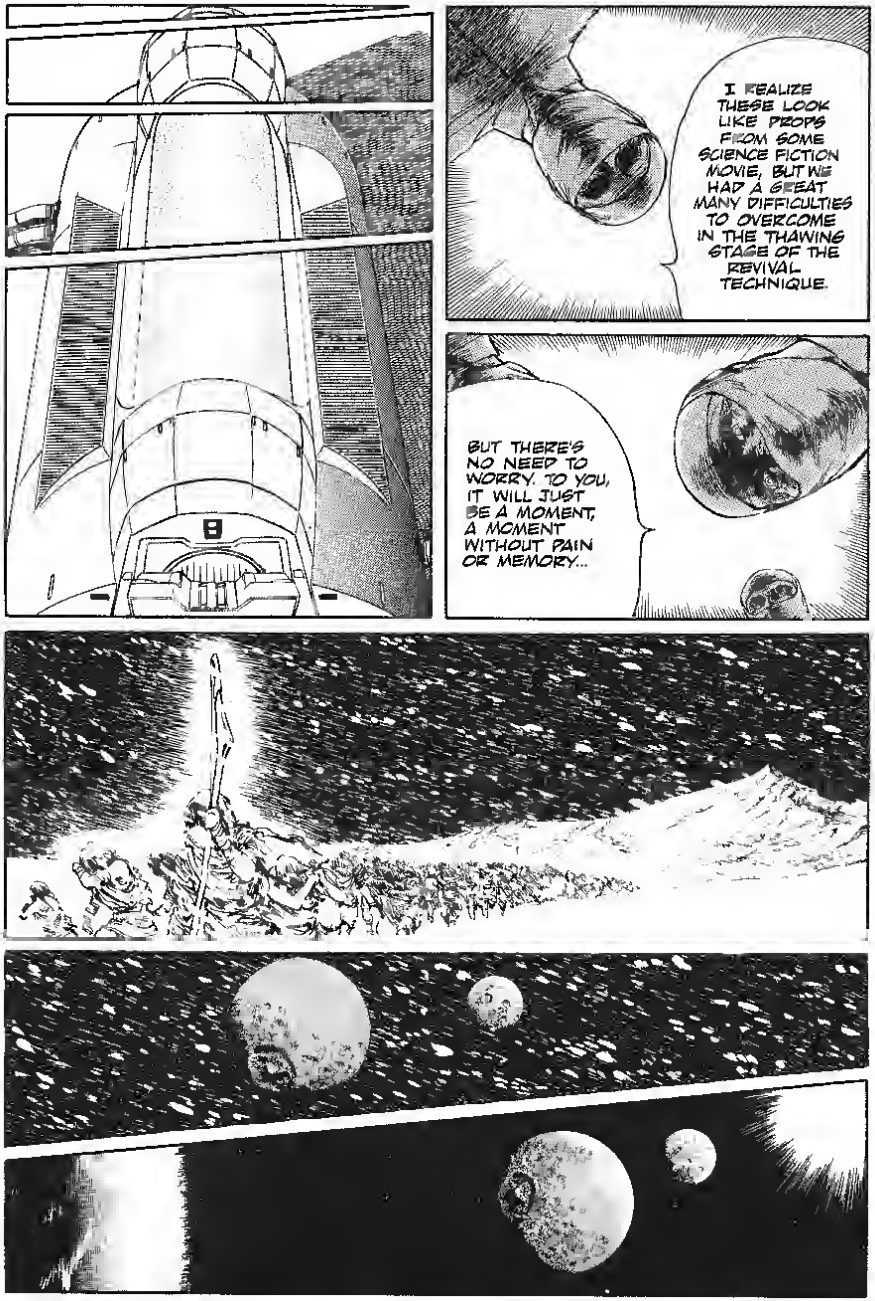

I WONDER IF THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT
dik
clak

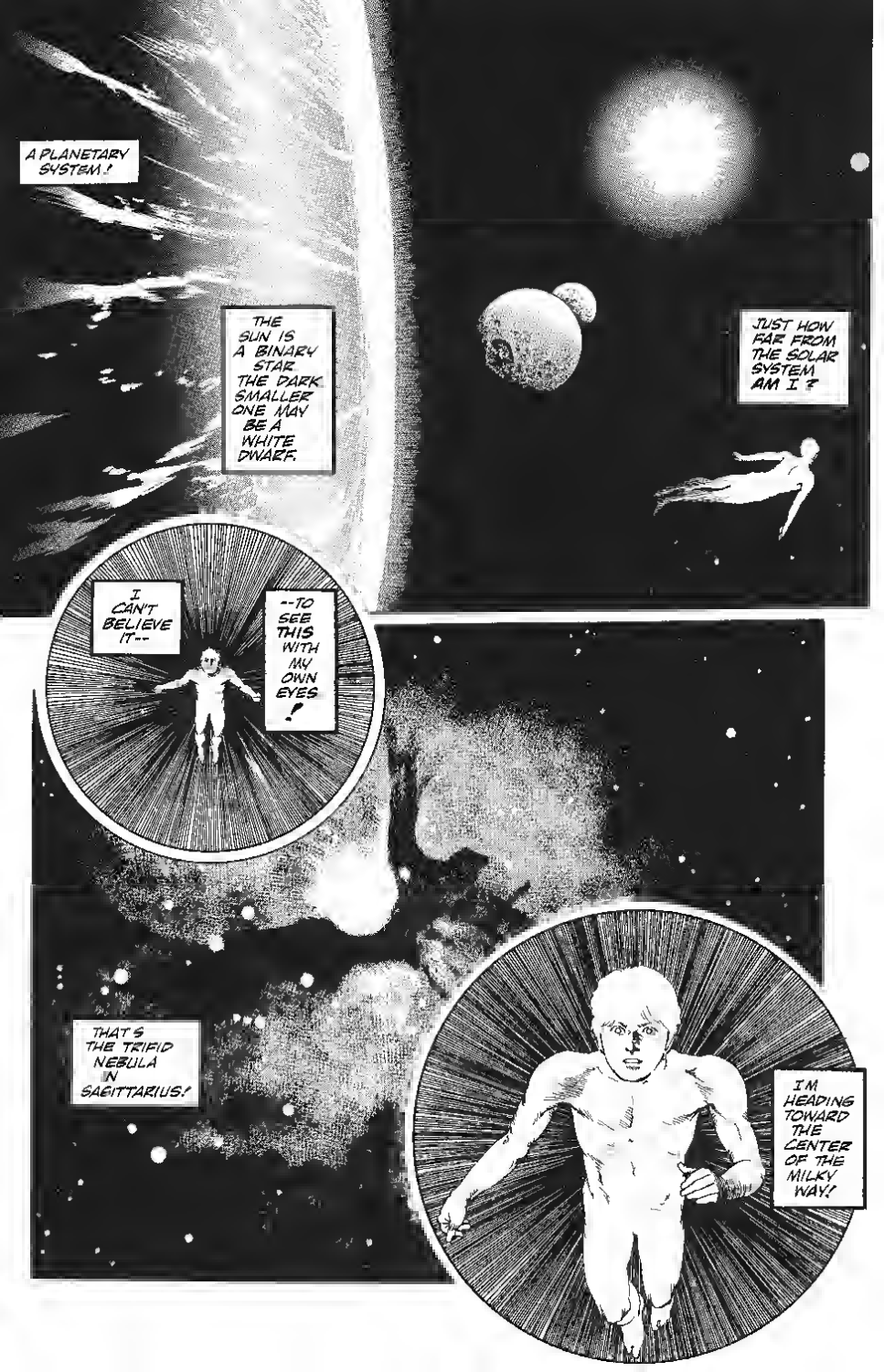

I REMEMBER SOMETHING I READ WHEN I WAS YOUNG...
...ABOUT HAVING RICH, COLORFUL DREAMS WHEN ONE SLEEPS IN THE ARTIC'S WHITE NIGHTS.
I'VE IMAGINED MANY THINGS. FOR EXAMPLE, WHAT KIND OF DREAMS WOULD YOU HAVE IN A SPACESHIP FLYING AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT ?
CHOMP
HEH, HEH
WITH TIME DRAWN OUT INFINITELY, IT MIGHT BE A TERRIFYING, UNENDING DREAM...
AN UNENDING DREAM FOR AN UNENDING SLEEP BUT YOU COULDN'T CALL THAT SLEEPING
NOT LIKE SLEEPING AT ALL.
IT'S THE SAME IN HIS CASE, ISN'T IT?
METABOLIC RATE LOWERED TO THE EXTREME THE HEART, EVEN THE BRAIN CELLS, ALMOST ENTIRELY FROZEN INSIDE THERE...
DEATH
YES, IT'S DEATH, THOUGH BRIEF
I WONDER JUST WHAT IT IS THEY SEE, THE DEAD


I'M SOMEWHERE BEYOND THE SOLAR SYSTEM... IS THIS DEEP SPACE?
WITHOUT A SPACESUIT, HOW CAN I

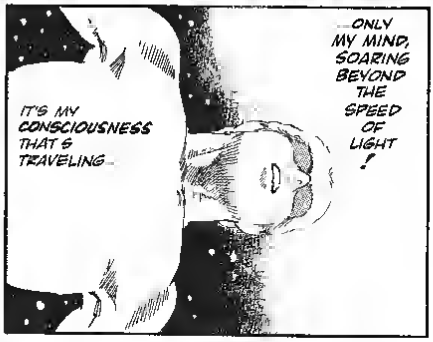
AM I FLYING FASTER THAN LIGHT. ?!
THAT WAS A RED GIANT, BUT I FEEL NO HEAT
BUT I CAN'T BE FLYING AT FASTER THAN LIGHTSPEED! I CAN'T STILL BE ALIVE!

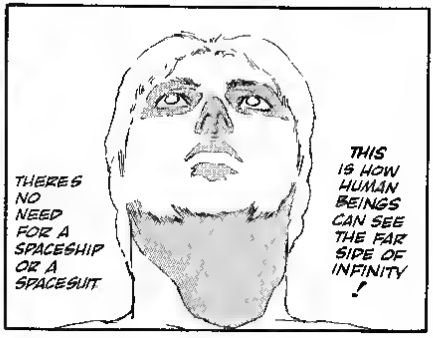
AN ASTRONAUT. I VOLUNTEERED FOR SOME EXPERIMENT, AND ?
I I WAS AN ASTRONOMER
THE MAGELLANIC CLOUD IS A SMALL GALAXY, MUCH YOUNGER THAN THE MILKY WAY.
THERE'S THE LARGE MAGELLANIC CLOUD A COMPANION GALAXY CIRCLING JUST BEYOND THE MILKY WAY THAT GLITTERING NEXT TO THE TARANTULA NEBULA IN THE CLOUD CENTER--THE BIRTH OF A NEW STAR ?!


I REALIZE THESE LOOK LIKE PROPS FROM SOME SCIENCE FICTION MOVIE, BUT WE HAD A GREAT MANY DIFFICULTIES TO OVERCOME IN THE THAWING STAGE OF THE REVIVAL TECHNIQUE.
BUT THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY. TO YOU, IT WILL JUST BE A MOMENT, A MOMENT WITHOUT PAIN OR MEMORY...

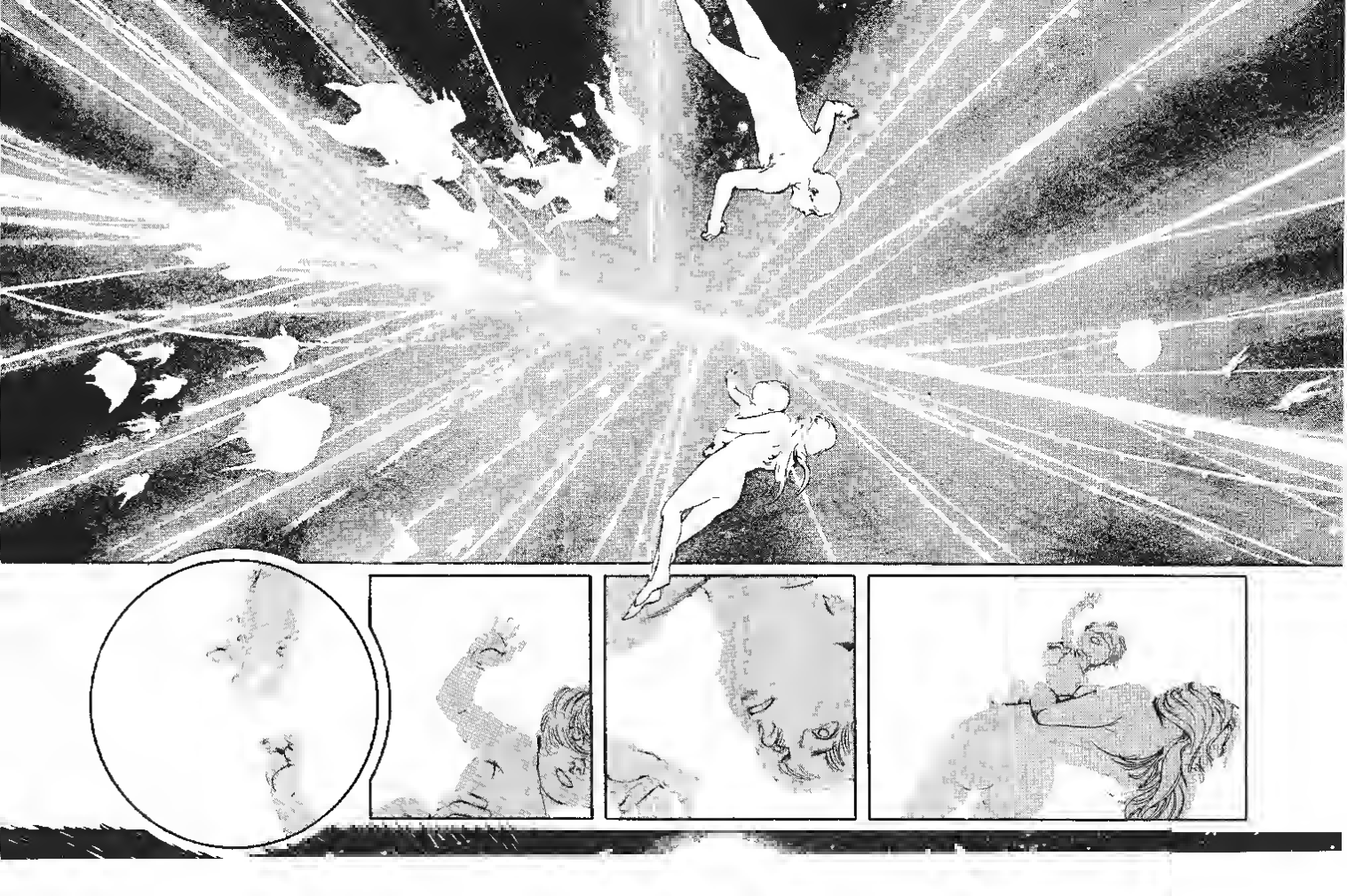

A PLANETARY SYSTEM!
THE SUN IS A BINARY STAR. THE DARK, SMALLER ONE MAY BE A WHITE DWARF.
JUST HOW FAR FROM THE SOLAR SYSTEM AM I?
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT--
--TO SEE THIS WITH MY OWN EYES!
THAT'S THE TRIFID NEBULA IN SAGITTARIUS!
I'M HEADING TOWARD THE CENTER OF THE MILKY WAY!

IF ONLY I COULD SHOW THIS SPECTACLE TO OTHER HUMAN BEINGS. IF I COULD TELL THEM ABOUT THIS...!


IT'S MY CONSCIOUSNESS THAT'S TRAVELING...
...ONLY MY MIND, SOARING BEYOND THE SPEED OF LIGHT!

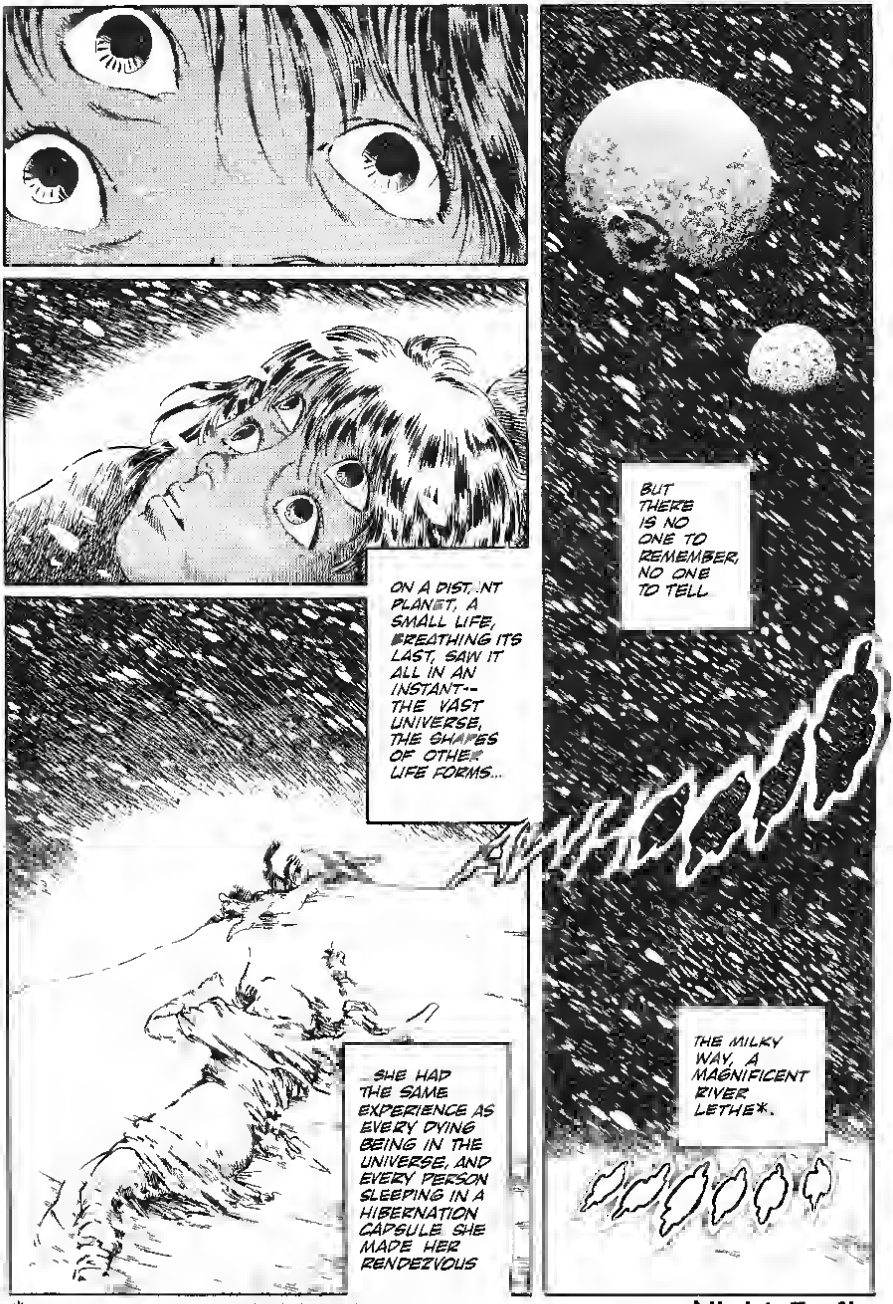

THERE'S NO NEED FOR A SPACESHIP OR A SPACESUIT.
THIS IS HOW HUMAN BEINGS CAN SEE THE FAR SIDE OF INFINITY!

JUST BEYOND THAT LIGHT!
THE FINAL RENDEZVOUS... MAN, THE UNIVERSE-- A HIGHER ORDER...!



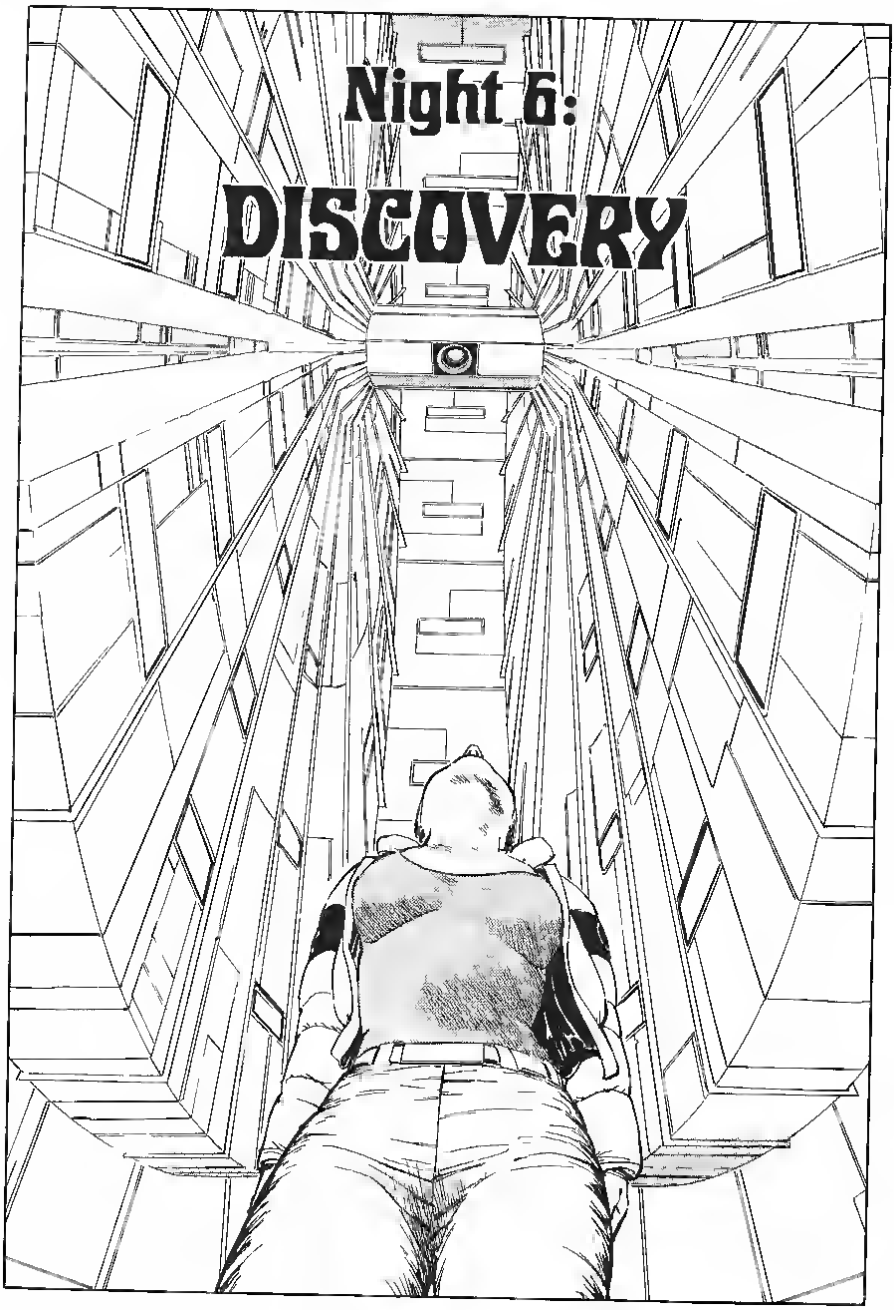
SHHHIKKK
ZMMM
ZMMM
A SUCCESS! A FIVE-DAY ARTIFICIAL HIBERNATION AND REVIVIFICATION-- ALL WITHOUT A HITCH.
NOW WE CAN PUT THE CAPSULE TO PRACTICAL USE.
KANG KAKANG
HOW DO YOU FEEL? STILL COLD?
I I DON'T.
...REMEMBER ANYTHING NOT A THING...
IT WAS.
...FIVE DAYS? WAS IT THAT SHORT A TIME?

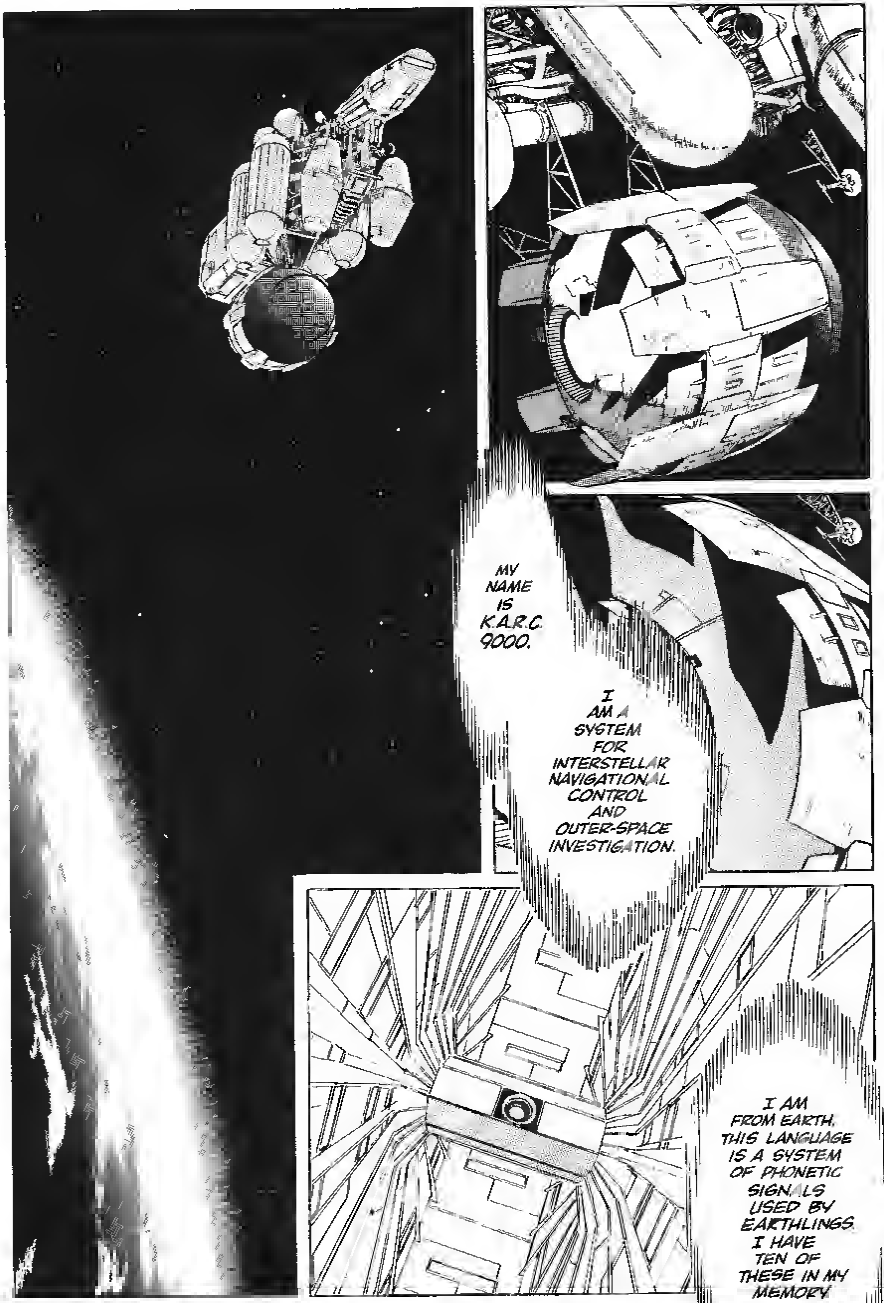
I FEEL LIKE I SAW SOMETHING— TOWARDS THE END... I CAN'T RECALL, BUT IT WAS... SOMETHING REALLY IMPORTANT—
IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT YOU CAN'T RECALL. YOU WERE IN A DEATH STATE FOR FIVE DAYS.
AND WHAT'S MORE...
...SOONER OR LATER, EVERYONE WILL EXPERIENCE THE SAME THING...
IN THE FUTURE, WHEN HIBERNATION CAPSULES ARE CARRIED ON SPACESHIPS, MORE AND MORE PEOPLE WILL EXPERIENCE LIVING DEATH.
WITHIN THE CAPSULES, PEOPLE ON SPACE JOURNEYS WILL SLEEP FOR LONG PERIODS, NEVER AGING.
EVEN WITH THE NEWEST PLASMA ROCKETS, TRAVEL WITHIN THE SOLAR SYSTEM REQUIRES SEVERAL YEARS.
AND COMPARED WITH DEEP SPACE, WELL...

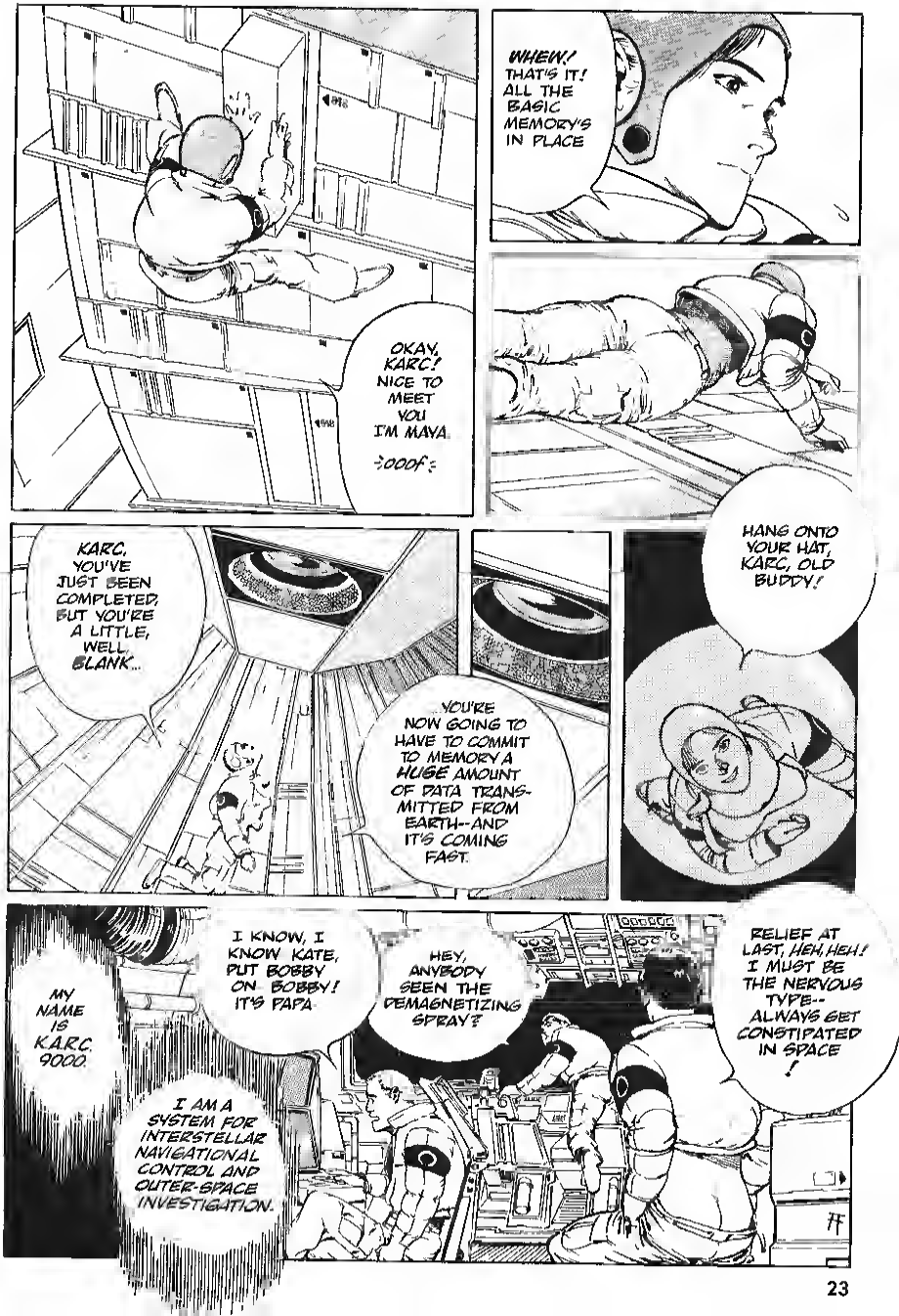

ON A DIST..NT PLANET, A SMALL LIFE, BREATHING ITS LAST, SAW IT ALL IN AN INSTANT-- THE VAST UNIVERSE, THE SHAPES OF OTHER LIFE FORMS...
...SHE HAD THE SAME EXPERIENCE AS EVERY DYING BEING IN THE UNIVERSE, AND EVERY PERSON SLEEPING IN A HIBERNATION CAPSULE SHE MADE HER RENDEZVOUS
BUT THERE IS NO ONE TO REMEMBER, NO ONE TO TELL
THE MILKY WAY, A MAGNIFICENT RIVER LETHE*.

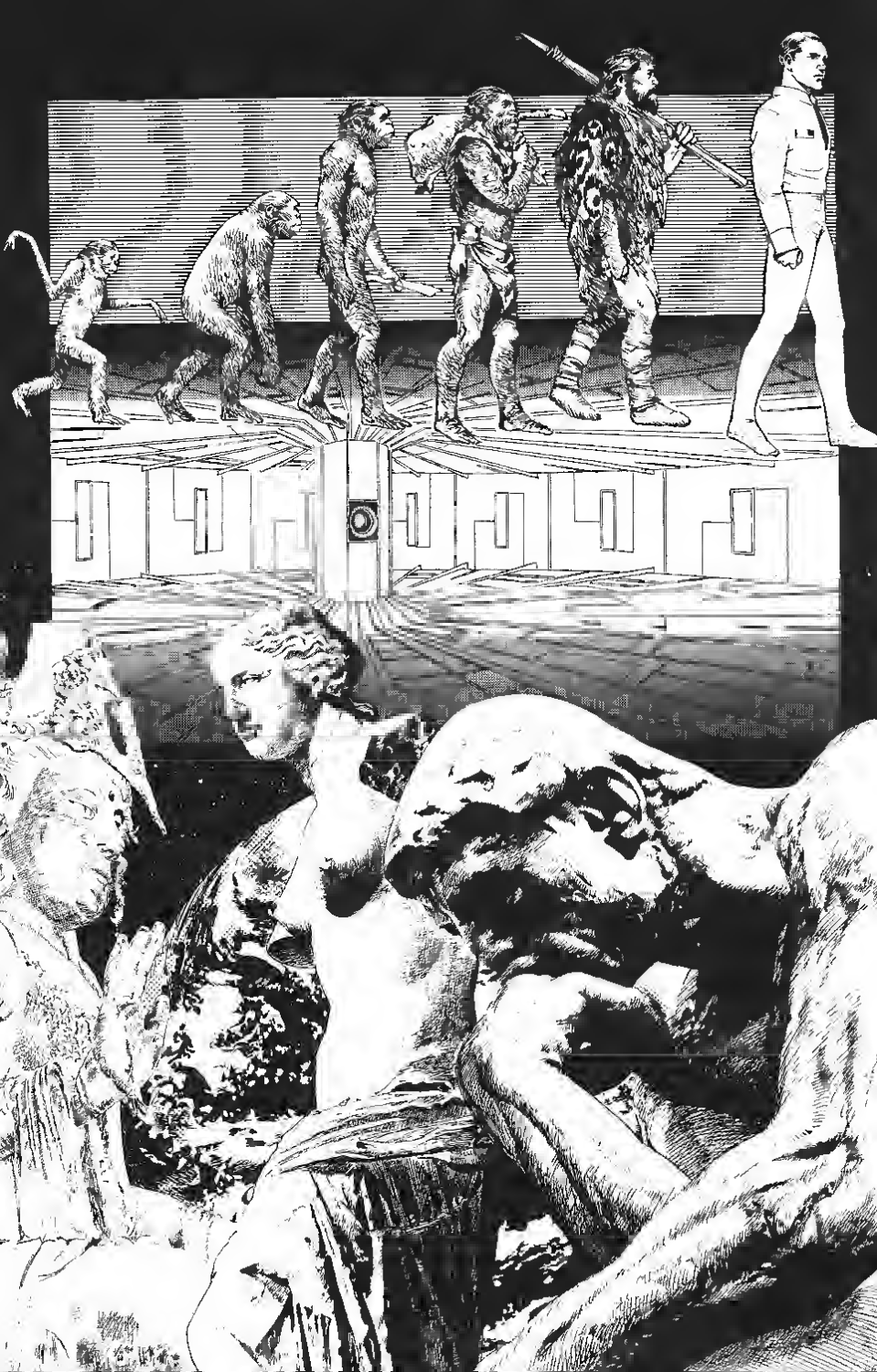
*THE RIVER LETHE--IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY, ONE OF THREE RIVERS IN HADES, THE WORLD OF THE DEAD. LETHE IS ALSO THE GODDESS OF FORGETFULNESS.

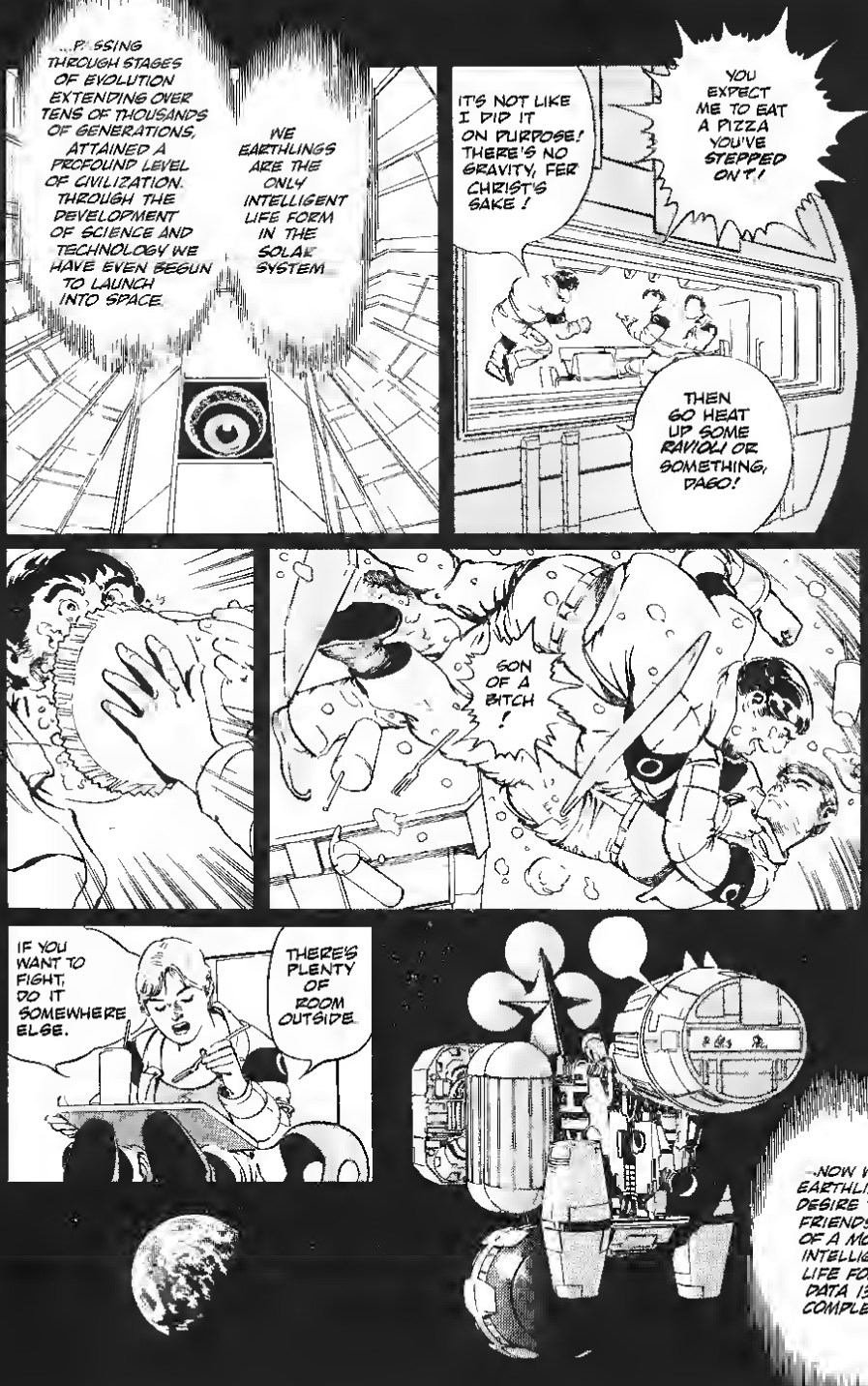
Night 5: fin

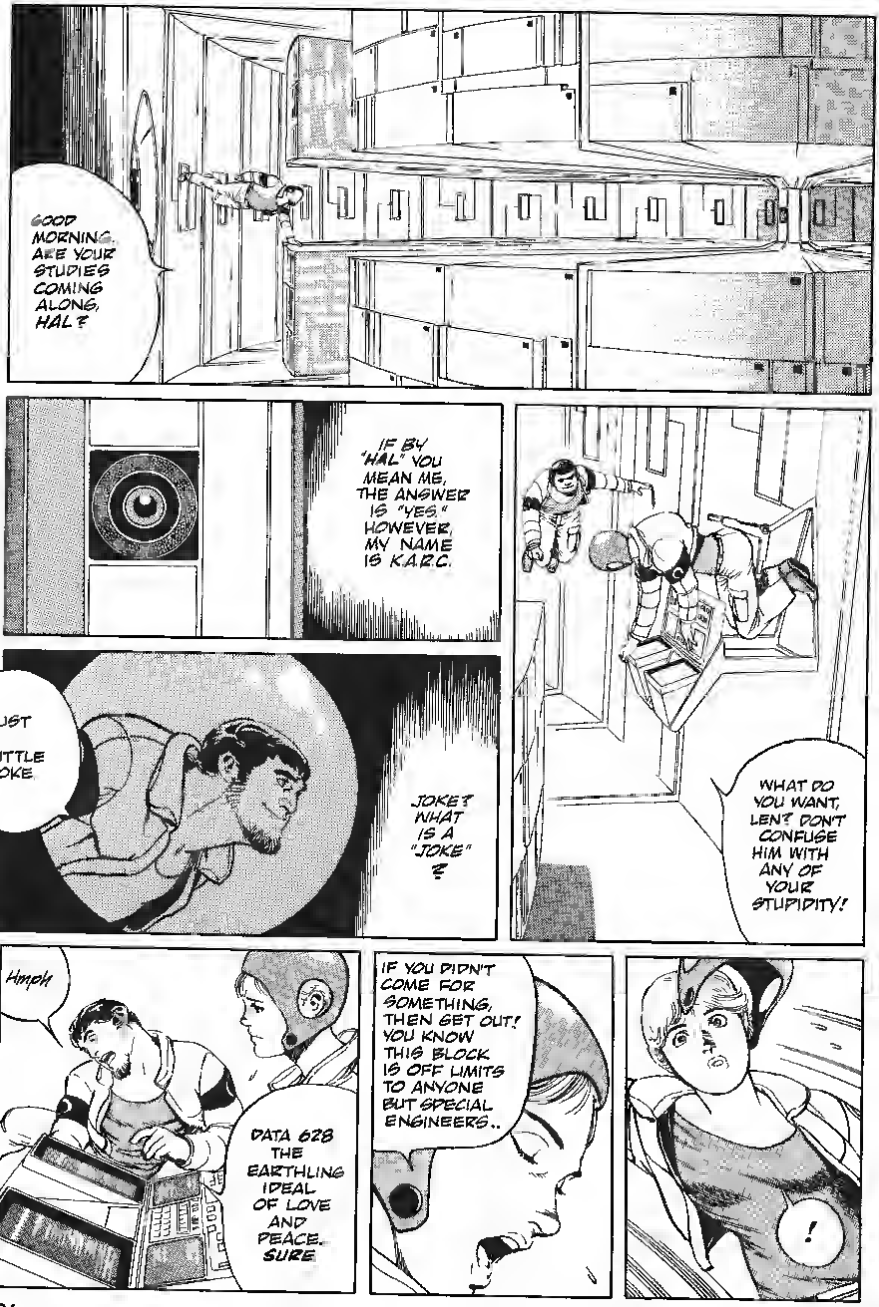

Night 6:
DISCOVERY


MY NAME IS K.A.R.C. 9000.
I AM A SYSTEM FOR INTERSTELLAR NAVIGATIONAL CONTROL AND OUTER-SPACE INVESTIGATION.
I AM FROM EARTH. THIS LANGUAGE IS A SYSTEM OF PHONETIC SIGNALS USED BY EARTHLINGS. I HAVE TEN OF THESE IN MY MEMORY.

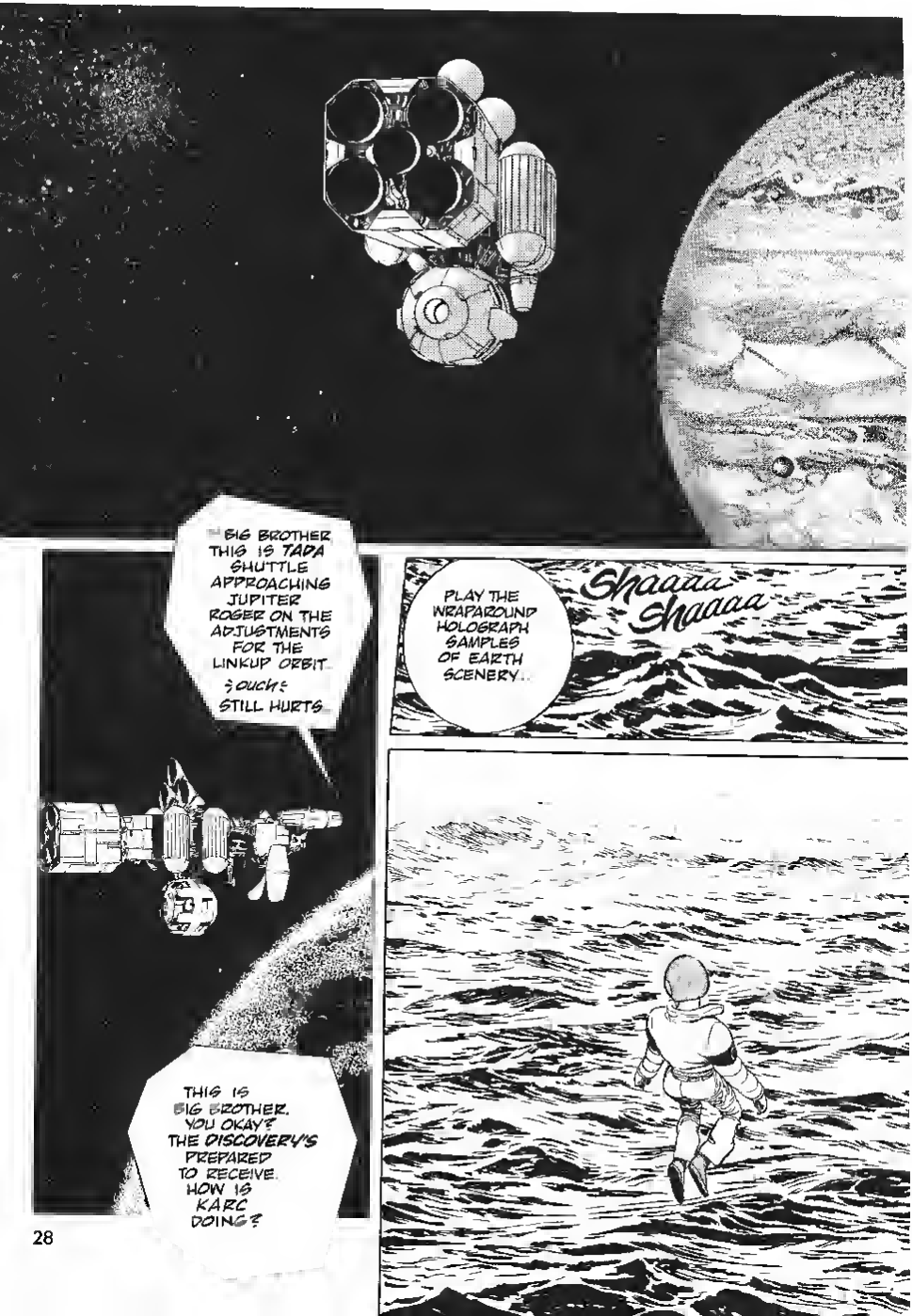

OKAY, KARC! NICE TO MEET YOU I'M MAYA.
:OOOF:
WHEW! THAT'S IT! ALL THE BASIC MEMORY'S IN PLACE
HANG ONTO YOUR HAT, KARC, OLD BUDDY!
KARC, YOU'VE JUST BEEN COMPLETED, BUT YOU'RE A LITTLE, WELL, BLANK...
YOU'RE NOW GOING TO HAVE TO COMMIT TO MEMORY A HUGE AMOUNT OF DATA TRANS-MITTED FROM EARTH--AND IT'S COMING FAST.
MY NAME IS K.A.R.C. 9000.
I AM A SYSTEM FOR INTERSTELLAR NAVIGATIONAL CONTROL AND OUTER-SPACE INVESTIGATION.
I KNOW, I KNOW KATE, PUT BOBBY ON. BOBBY! IT'S PAPA.
HEY, ANYBODY SEEN THE DEMAGNETIZING SPRAY?
RELIEF AT LAST, HEH, HEH! I MUST BE THE NERVOUS TYPE-- ALWAYS GET CONSTIPATED IN SPACE!

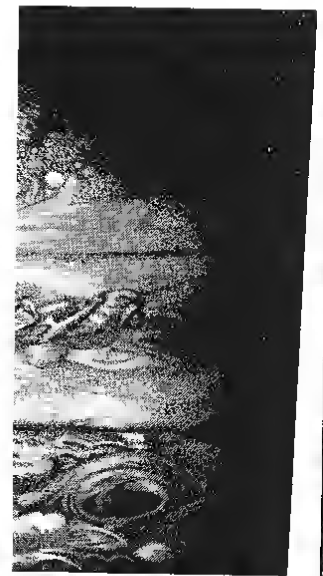


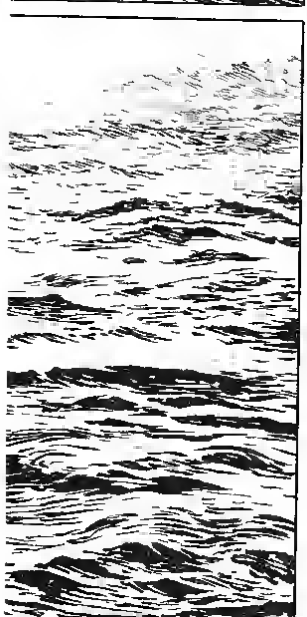

...PASSING THROUGH STAGES OF EVOLUTION EXTENDING OVER TENS OF THOUSANDS OF GENERATIONS, ATTAINED A PROFOUND LEVEL OF CIVILIZATION. THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WE HAVE EVEN BEGUN TO LAUNCH INTO SPACE.
WE EARTHLINGS ARE THE ONLY INTELLIGENT LIFE FORM IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM.
IT'S NOT LIKE I DID IT ON PURPOSE! THERE'S NO GRAVITY, FER CHRIST'S SAKE!
YOU EXPECT ME TO EAT A PIZZA YOU'VE STEPPED ON?!
THEN GO HEAT UP SOME RAVIOLI OR SOMETHING, DAGO!
SON OF A BITCH!
IF YOU WANT TO FIGHT, DO IT SOMEWHERE ELSE.
THERE'S PLENTY OF ROOM OUTSIDE.
...NOW WE EARTHLING DESIRE THE FRIENDSHI OF A MORE INTELLIGEN LIFE FORM DATA 136, COMPLETE

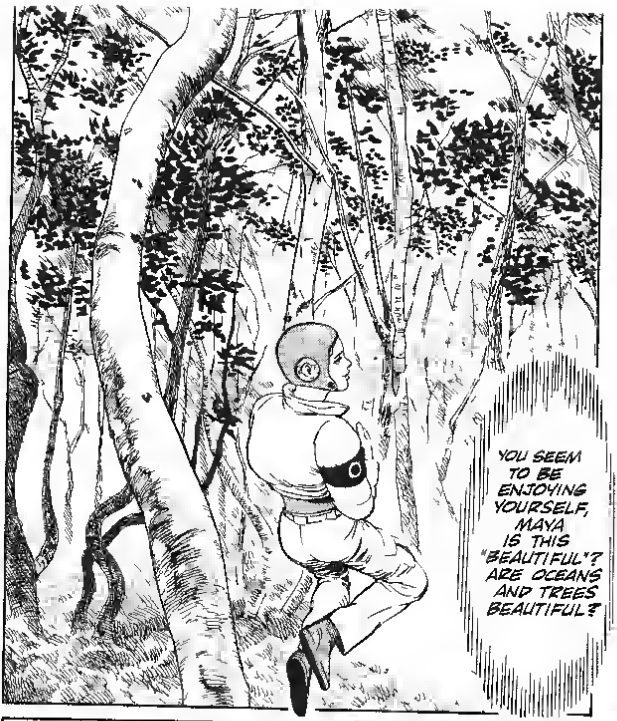

GOOD MORNING. ARE YOUR STUDIES COMING ALONG, HAL?
IF BY "HAL" YOU MEAN ME, THE ANSWER IS "YES." HOWEVER, MY NAME IS K.A.R.C.
WHAT DO YOU WANT, LEN? DON'T CONFUSE HIM WITH ANY OF YOUR STUPIDITY!
JOKE? WHAT IS A "JOKE"?
JUST A LITTLE JOKE.
Hmph
DATA 628 THE EARTHLING IDEAL OF LOVE AND PEACE. SURE
IF YOU DIDN'T COME FOR SOMETHING, THEN GET OUT! YOU KNOW THIS BLOCK IS OFF LIMITS TO ANYONE BUT SPECIAL ENGINEERS..
!

WATCH THIS, KARC I'LL GIVE YOU A DEMONSTRATION OF LOVE AND PEACE!
MMPH! MRRPH!
WHUD
NEXT TIME, I REPORT YOU TO EARTH, LEN.
@#$%&!
IT WAS J-JUST A JOKE ulrgh
?!?!

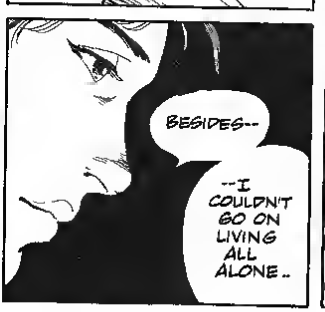

BIG BROTHER THIS IS TADA SHUTTLE APPROACHING JUPITER ROGER ON THE ADJUSTMENTS FOR THE LINKUP ORBIT. ;OUCH; STILL HURTS.
PLAY THE WRAPAROUND HOLOGRAPH SAMPLES OF EARTH SCENERY..
Shaaaa Shaaaa
THIS IS BIG BROTHER. YOU OKAY? THE DISCOVERY'S PREPARED TO RECEIVE. HOW IS KARC DOING?

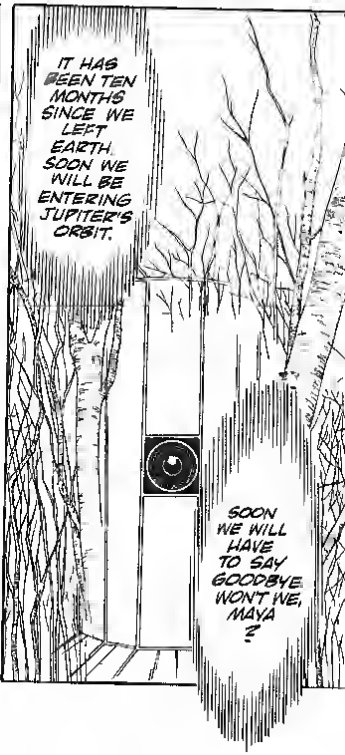


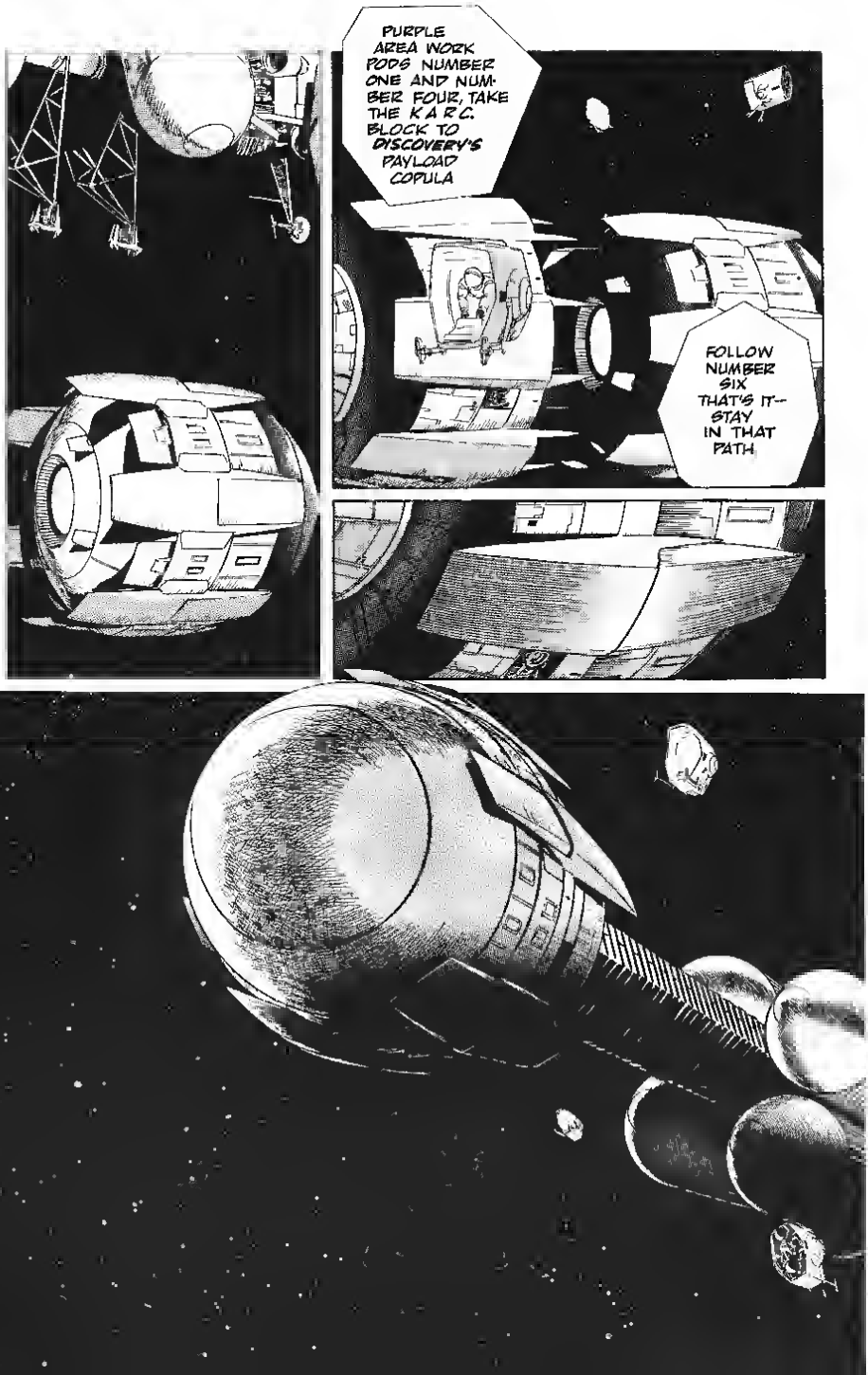


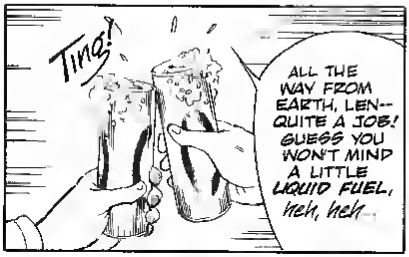

YOU SEEM TO BE ENJOYING YOURSELF, MAYA IS THIS "BEAUTIFUL"? ARE OCEANS AND TREES BEAUTIFUL?

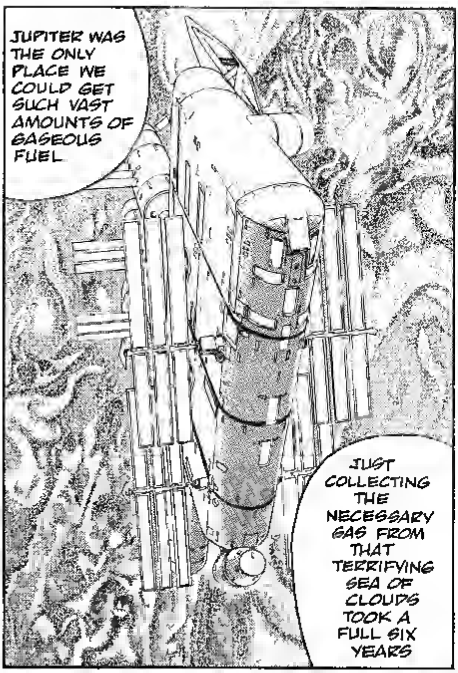
YES, BUT THEY, WELL— GIVE ME A PEACEFUL FEELING— IF I HAD TO TRAVEL THROUGH NOTHING BUT SPACE FOR YEARS, I'M SURE I'D GO CRAZY.

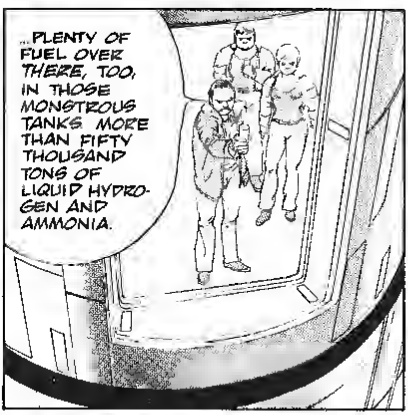

BESIDES--
--I COULDN'T GO ON LIVING ALL ALONE..

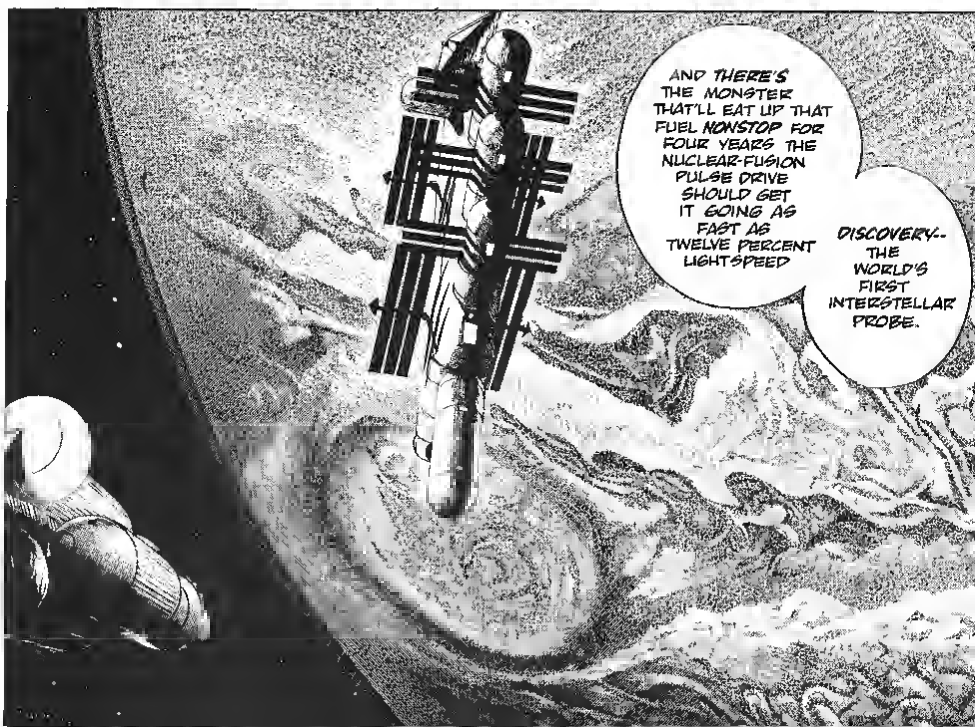

IT HAS BEEN TEN MONTHS SINCE WE LEFT EARTH. SOON WE WILL BE ENTERING JUPITER'S ORBIT.
SOON WE WILL HAVE TO SAY GOODBYE. WON'T WE, MAYA?


PURPLE AREA WORK PODS NUMBER ONE AND NUMBER FOUR, TAKE THE K A R C. BLOCK TO DISCOVERY'S PAYLOAD COPULA
FOLLOW NUMBER SIX THAT'S IT-- STAY IN THAT PATH

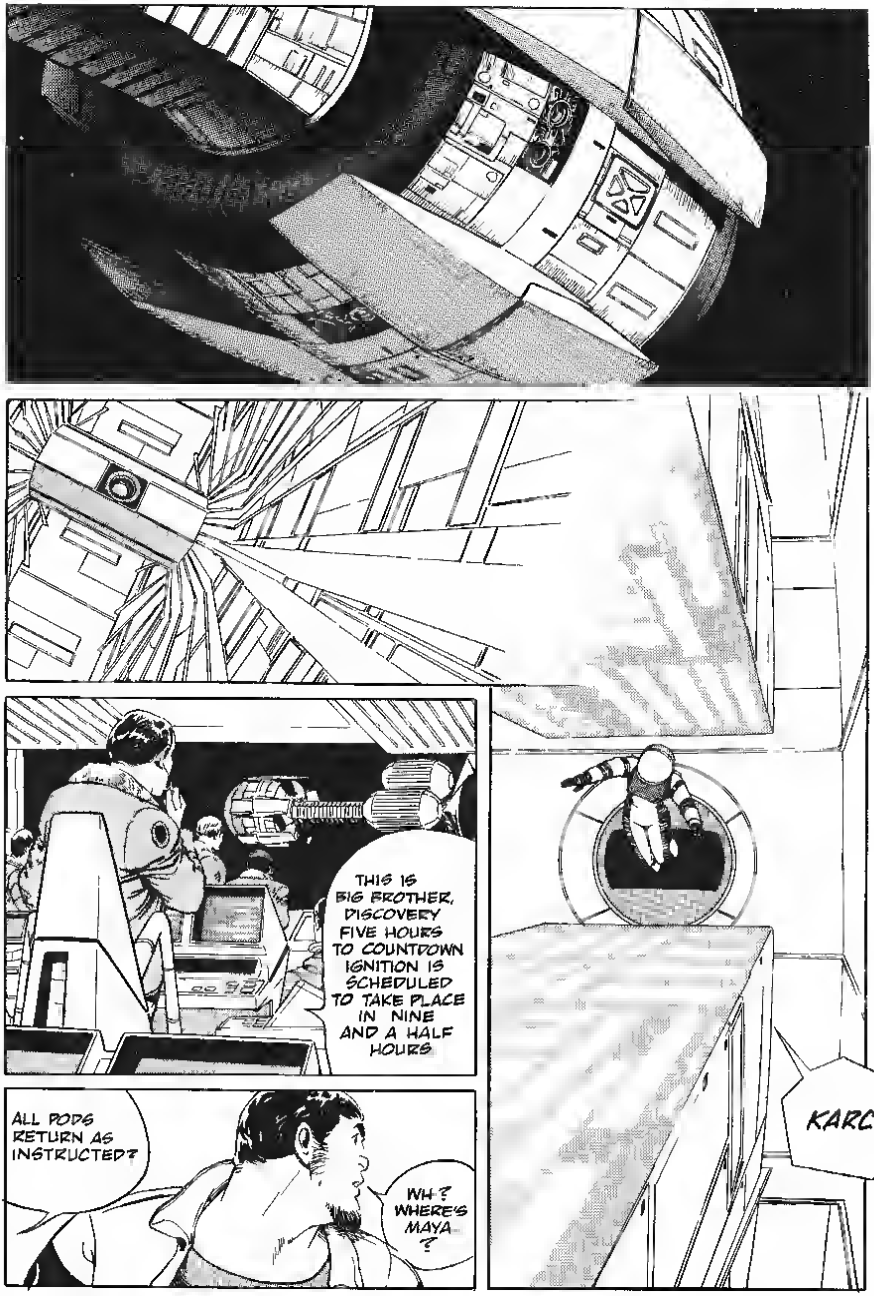

Ting!
ALL THE WAY FROM EARTH, LEN--QUITE A JOB! GUESS YOU WON'T MIND A LITTLE LIQUID FUEL, heh, heh...

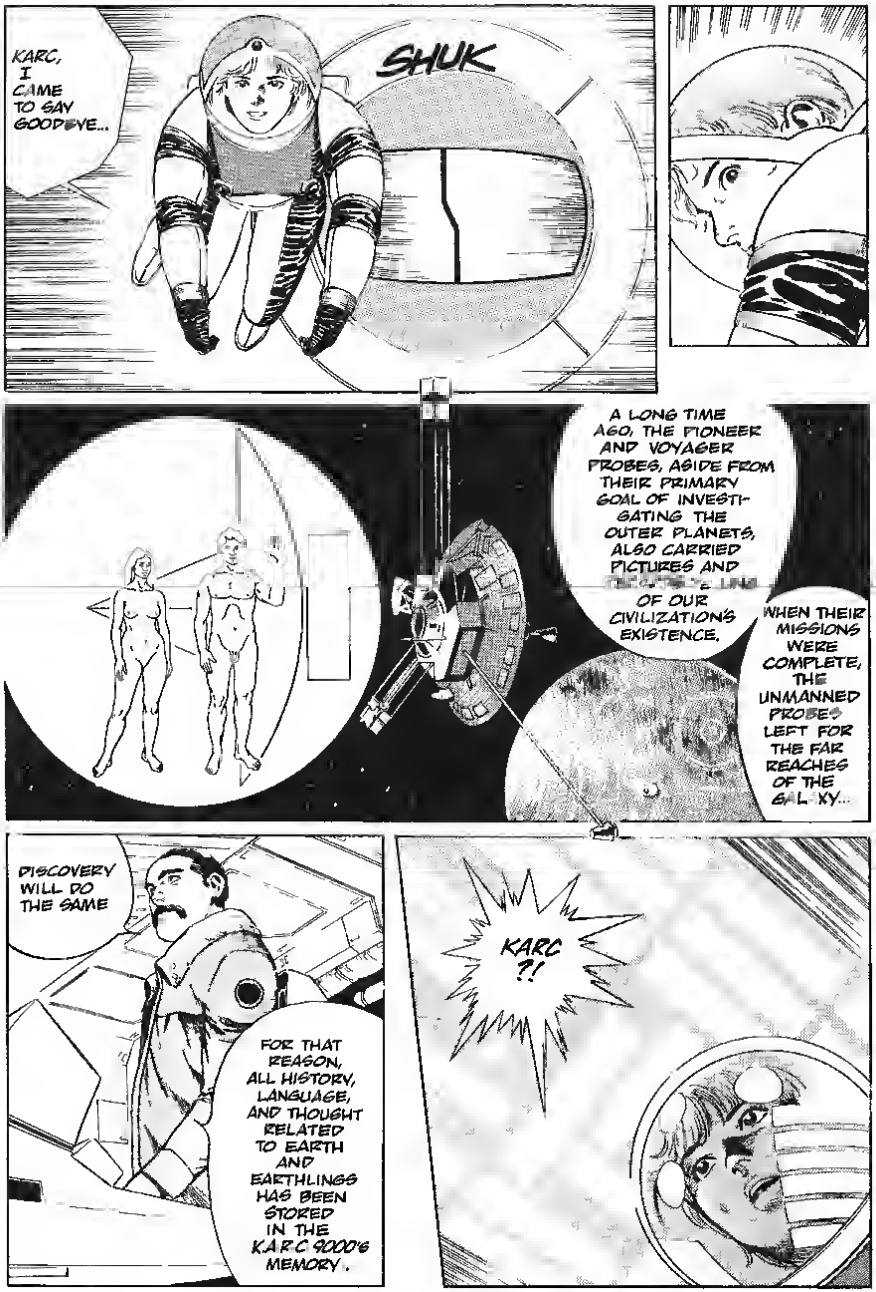

JUPITER WAS THE ONLY PLACE WE COULD GET SUCH VAST AMOUNTS OF GASEOUS FUEL
JUST COLLECTING THE NECESSARY GAS FROM THAT TERRIFYING SEA OF CLOUDS TOOK A FULL SIX YEARS

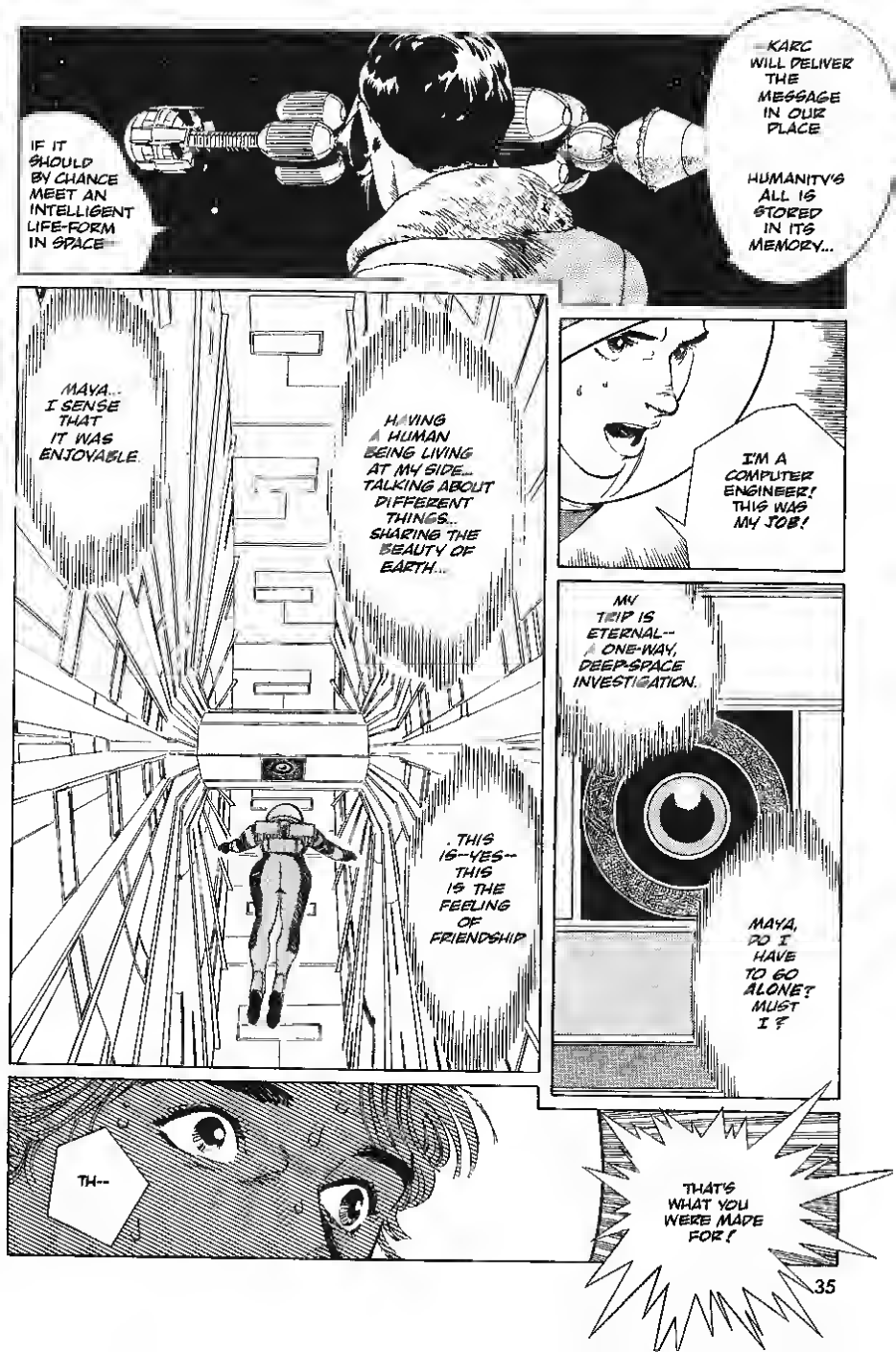

...PLENTY OF FUEL OVER THERE, TOO, IN THOSE MONSTROUS TANKS MORE THAN FIFTY THOUSAND TONS OF LIQUID HYDROGEN AND AMMONIA.


AND THERE'S THE MONSTER THAT'LL EAT UP THAT FUEL NONSTOP FOR FOUR YEARS THE NUCLEAR-FUSION PULSE DRIVE SHOULD GET IT GOING AS FAST AS TWELVE PERCENT LIGHTSPEED
DISCOVERY--THE WORLD'S FIRST INTERSTELLAR PROBE.

BUT EVEN AT THAT SPEED, IT'LL TAKE ITS GOOD OLD TIME GETTING TO ITS DESTINATION, HUH?
BARNARD'S STAR IN THE CONSTELLATION OPHIUCHUS. FIVE POINT NINE LIGHT-YEARS AWAY.
NEXT TO ALPHA CENTAURI, IT'S THE CLOSEST TO THE SOLAR SYSTEM A VALUABLE STAR--ALMOST CERTAIN TO HAVE SEVERAL PLANETS
BUT IT'LL TAKE FIFTY YEARS
THAT MEANS SIX YEARS FOR EVEN THE INVESTIGATION REPORTS TO BE RECEIVED ON EARTH
A FIFTY-YEAR TRIP, HUH? THAT'S A CENTURY ROUND-TRIP, MAYA!
THAT'S THE REASON HUMANS CAN'T RIDE ABOARD DISCOVERY
NOT THE ONLY REASON, OF COUSE
DISCOVERY'S ONLY GOT ENOUGH FUEL TO GET IT TO BARNARD'S STAR THERE IS NO RETURN TRIP.


THIS IS BIG BROTHER, DISCOVERY FIVE HOURS TO COUNTDOWN IGNITION IS SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE IN NINE AND A HALF HOURS
KARC...
ALL PODS RETURN AS INSTRUCTED?
WH? WHERE'S MAYA?

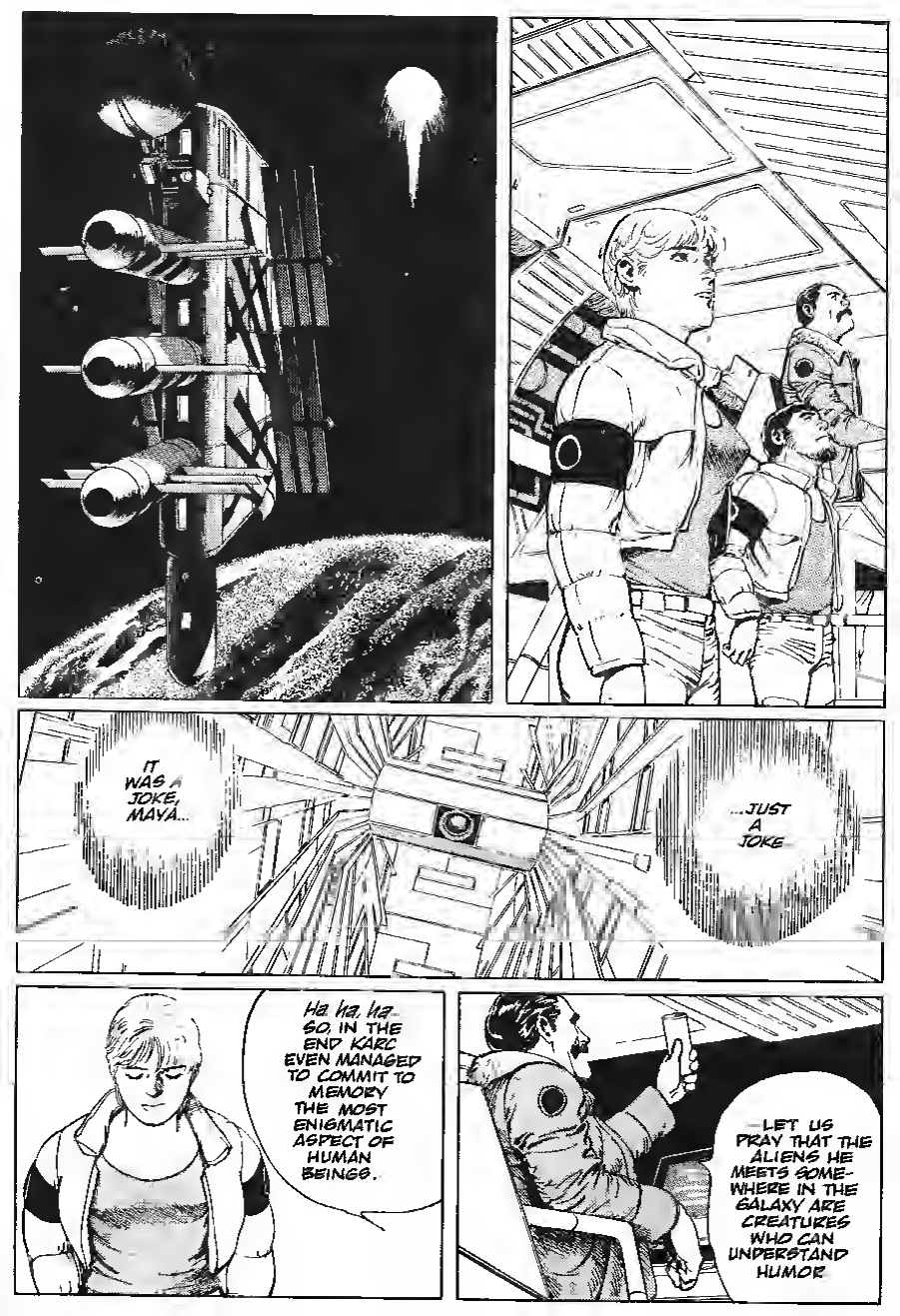

KARC, I CAME TO SAY GOODBYE...
SHUK
A LONG TIME AGO, THE PIONEER AND VOYAGER PROBES, ASIDE FROM THEIR PRIMARY GOAL OF INVESTIGATING THE OUTER PLANETS, ALSO CARRIED PICTURES AND
OF OUR CIVILIZATIONS EXISTENCE.
WHEN THEIR MISSIONS WERE COMPLETE, THE UNMANNED PROBES LEFT FOR THE FAR REACHES OF THE GALAXY...
DISCOVERY WILL DO THE SAME
FOR THAT REASON, ALL HISTORY, LANGUAGE, AND THOUGHT RELATED TO EARTH AND EARTHLINGS HAS BEEN STORED IN THE K.A.R.C 9000'S MEMORY.
KARC ?!

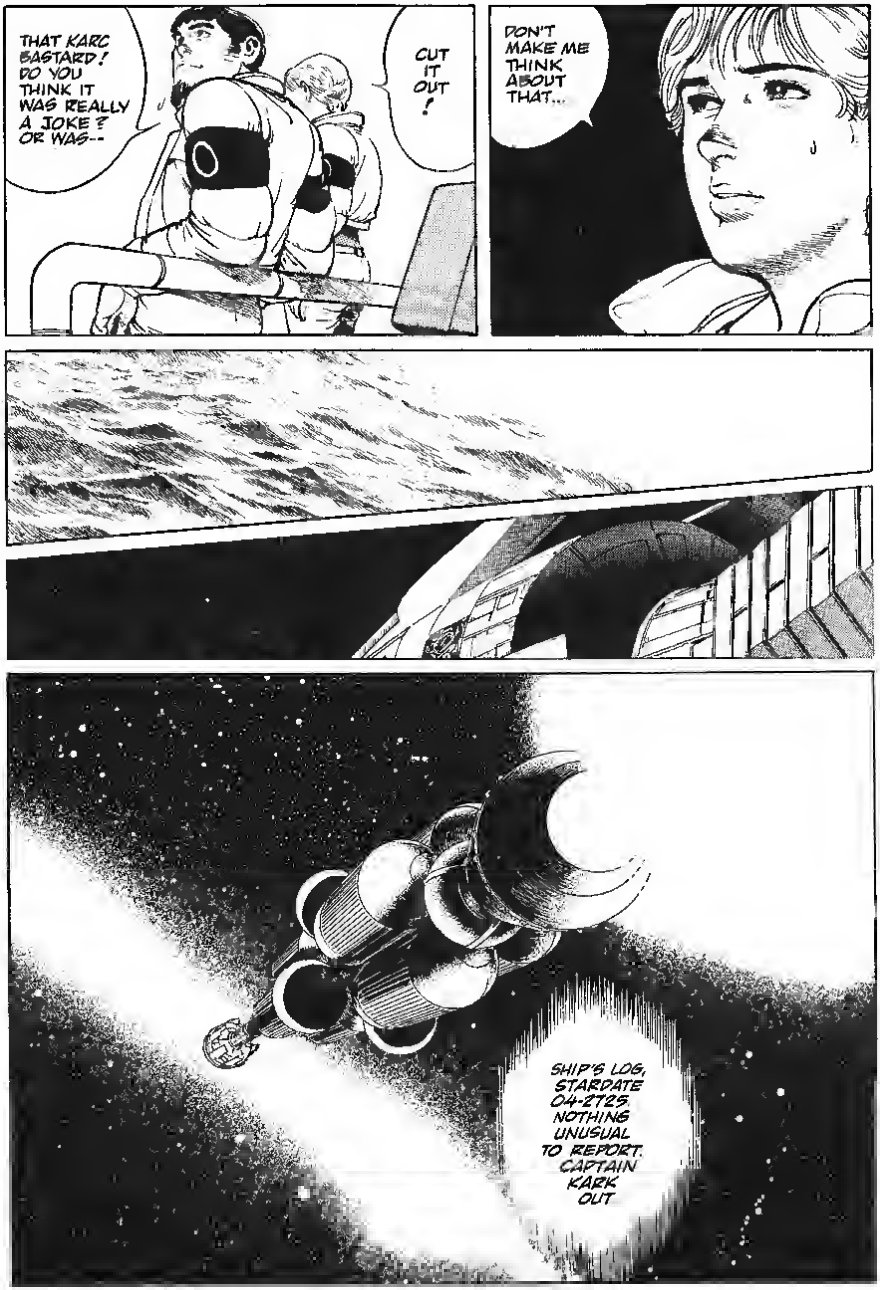

IF IT SHOULD BY CHANCE MEET AN INTELLIGENT LIFE-FORM IN SPACE—
—KARC WILL DELIVER THE MESSAGE IN OUR PLACE
HUMANITY'S ALL IS STORED IN ITS MEMORY...
MAYA... I SENSE THAT IT WAS ENJOYABLE.
HAVING A HUMAN BEING LIVING AT MY SIDE... TALKING ABOUT DIFFERENT THINGS... SHARING THE BEAUTY OF EARTH...
. THIS IS--YES-- THIS IS THE FEELING OF FRIENDSHIP
I'M A COMPUTER ENGINEER! THIS WAS MY JOB!
MY TRIP IS ETERNAL-- A ONE-WAY, DEEP-SPACE INVESTIGATION.
MAYA, DO I HAVE TO GO ALONE? MUST I?
TH--
THAT'S WHAT YOU WERE MADE FOR!

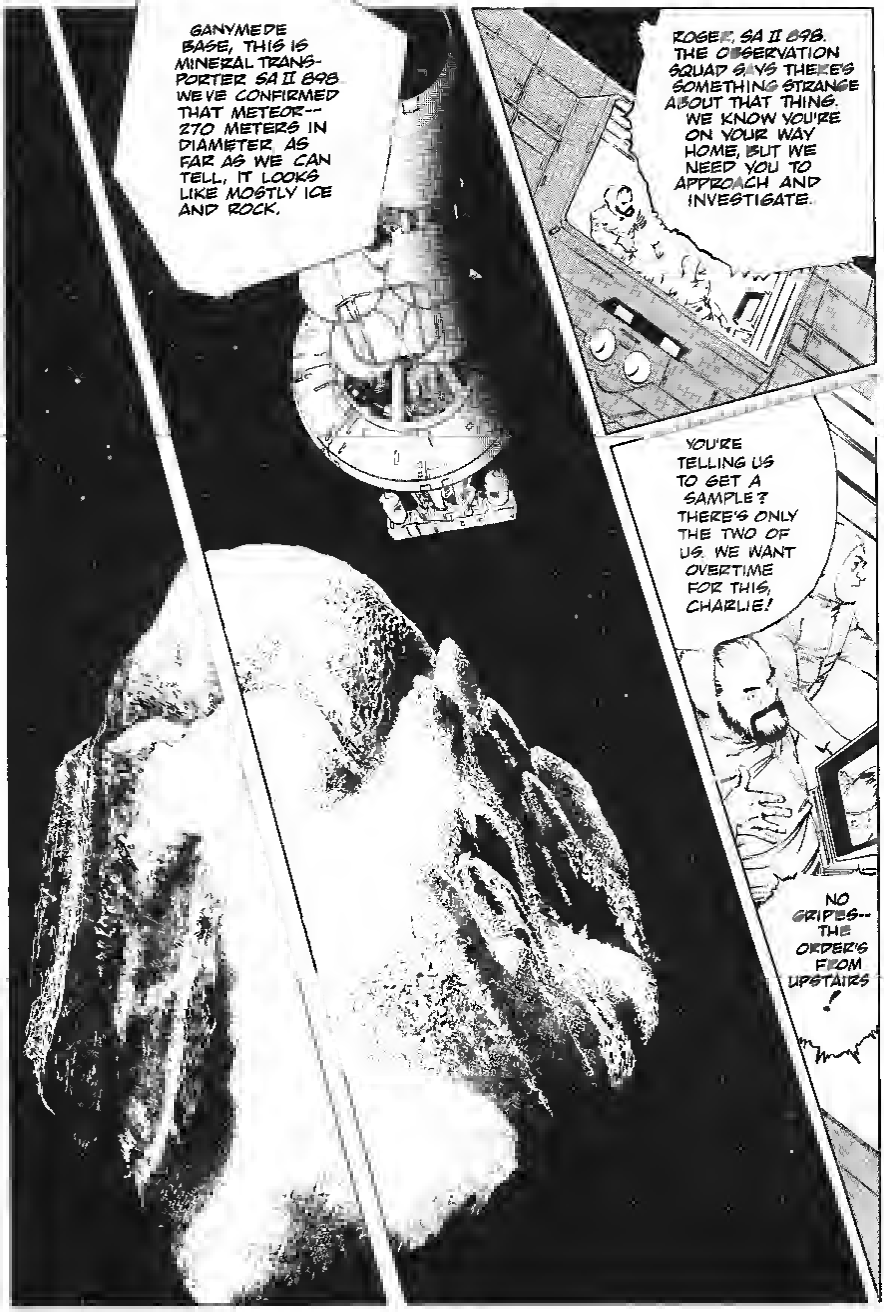
KARC...
...STOP BEING SILLY! I'M NOT ENJOYING THIS ONE BIT!
WHERE'S THE LOCK ?! OPEN THE HATCH RIGHT NOW!

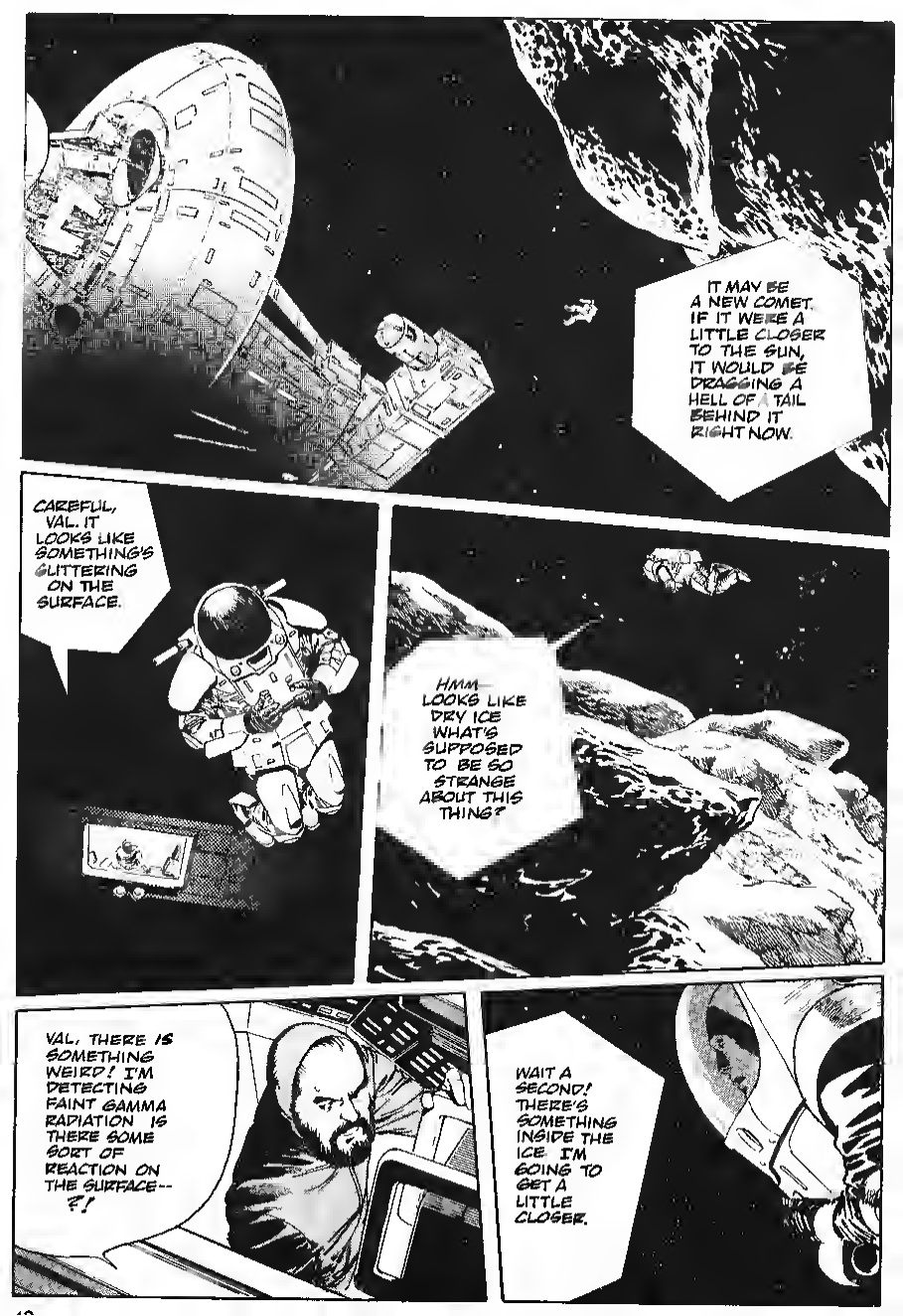
I-- PERHAPS I HAVE COME TO KNOW TOO MUCH ABOUT HUMAN BEINGS.
PERHAPS I HAVE SPENT TOO MUCH TIME WITH THEM
KARC! LET ME OUT OF HERE!

KARC

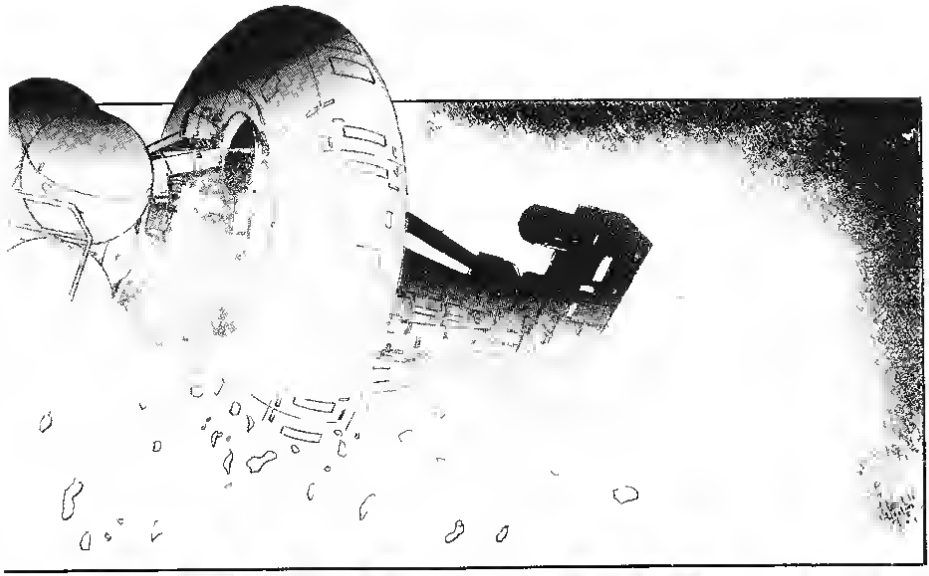

IT WAS A JOKE, MAYA...
...JUST A JOKE
Ha, ha, ha. SO, IN THE END KARC EVEN MANAGED TO COMMIT TO MEMORY THE MOST ENIGMATIC ASPECT OF HUMAN BEINGS.
—LET US PRAY THAT THE ALIENS HE MEETS SOMEWHERE IN THE GALAXY ARE CREATURES WHO CAN UNDERSTAND HUMOR


THAT KARC BASTARD! DO YOU THINK IT WAS REALLY A JOKE? OR WAS--
CUT IT OUT!
DON'T MAKE ME THINK ABOUT THAT...
SHIP'S LOG, STARDATE 04-2725. NOTHING UNUSUAL TO REPORT. CAPTAIN KARK OUT.

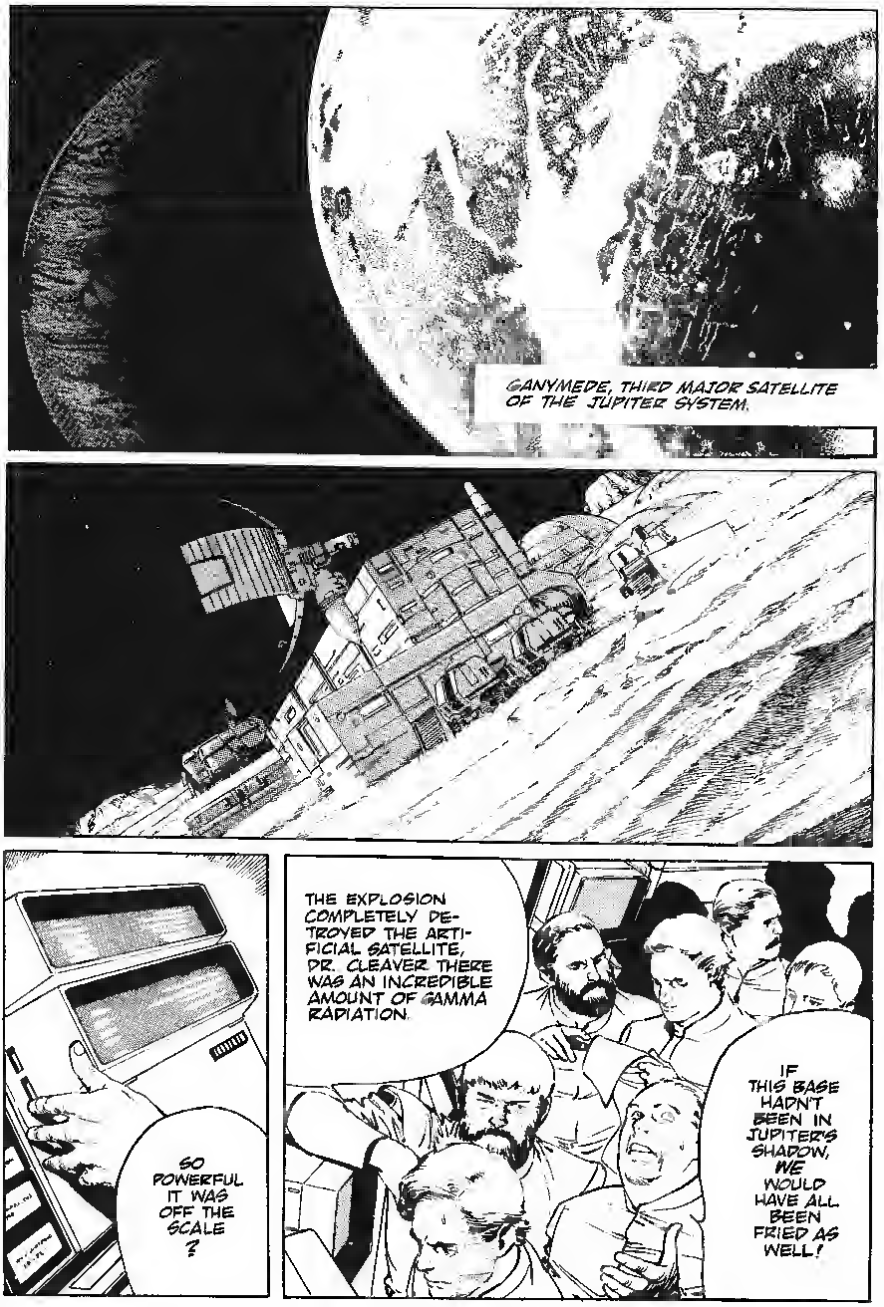

GANYMEDE BASE, THIS IS MINERAL TRANSPORTER SA II 898. WE'VE CONFIRMED THAT METEOR--270 METERS IN DIAMETER AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL, IT LOOKS LIKE MOSTLY ICE AND ROCK.
ROGER, SA II 898. THE OBSERVATION SQUAD SAYS THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT THAT THING. WE KNOW YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY HOME, BUT WE NEED YOU TO APPROACH AND INVESTIGATE.
YOU'RE TELLING US TO GET A SAMPLE? THERE'S ONLY THE TWO OF US. WE WANT OVERTIME FOR THIS, CHARLIE!
NO GRIPES-- THE ORDER'S FROM UPSTAIRS!


IT MAY BE A NEW COMET. IF IT WERE A LITTLE CLOSER TO THE SUN, IT WOULD BE DRAGGING A HELL OF A TAIL BEHIND IT RIGHT NOW.
CAREFUL, VAL. IT LOOKS LIKE SOMETHING'S GLITTERING ON THE SURFACE.
HMM... LOOKS LIKE DRY ICE. WHAT'S SUPPOSED TO BE SO STRANGE ABOUT THIS THING?
VAL, THERE IS SOMETHING WEIRD! I'M DETECTING FAINT GAMMA RADIATION. IS THERE SOME SORT OF REACTION ON THE SURFACE--?!
WAIT A SECOND! THERE'S SOMETHING INSIDE THE ICE. I'M GOING TO GET A LITTLE CLOSER.

SOMETHING-- FROZEN IN THERE...
NO, VAL! GET AWAY! DON'T TOUCH IT!
bip bip bip
IT...
...IT CAN'T BE... IT CAN'T...

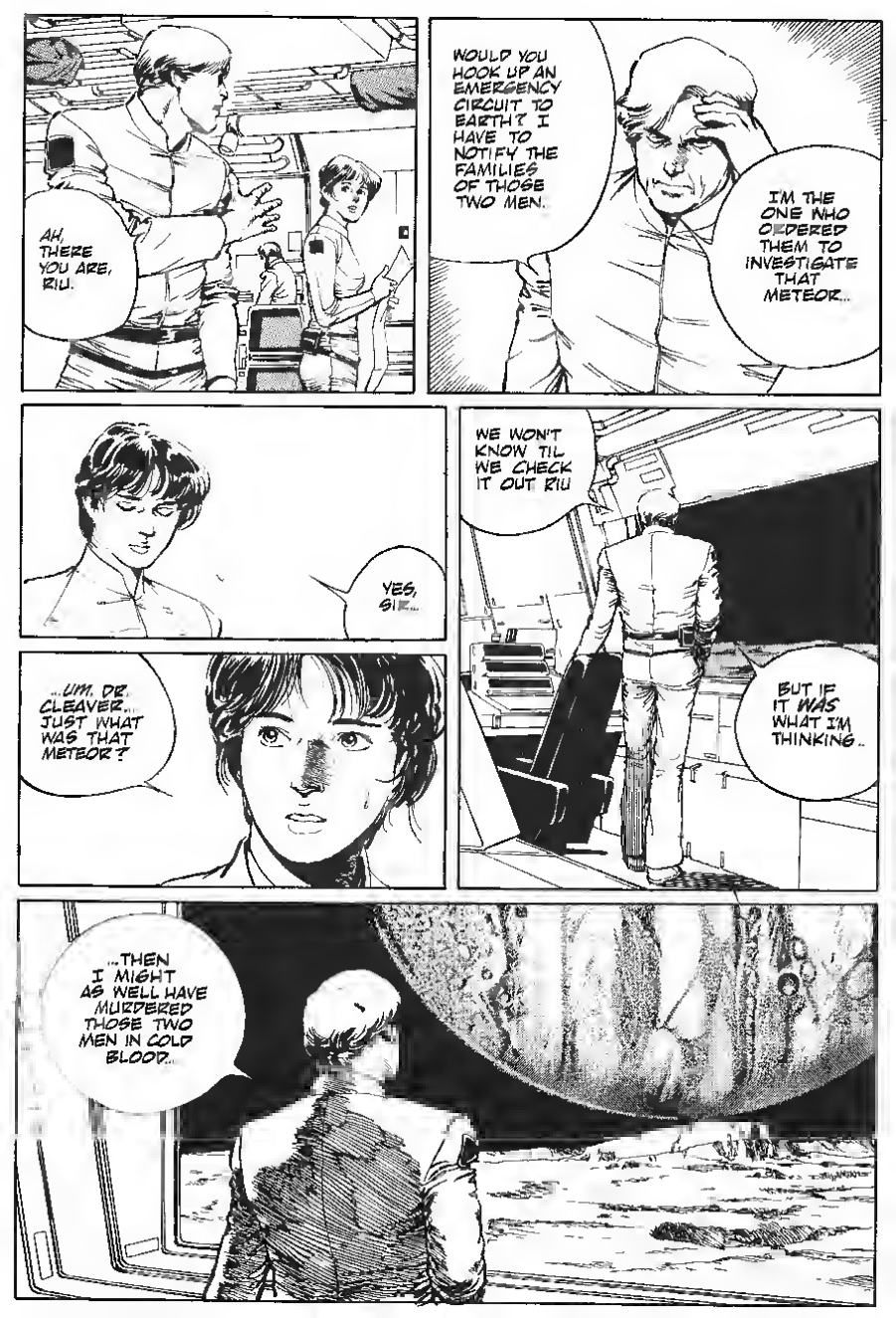


Night 7:
LUCIFER RISING
part 1


GANYMEDE, THIRD MAJOR SATELLITE OF THE JUPITER SYSTEM.
SO POWERFUL IT WAS OFF THE SCALE?
THE EXPLOSION COMPLETELY DESTROYED THE ARTIFICIAL SATELLITE, DR. CLEAVER. THERE WAS AN INCREDIBLE AMOUNT OF GAMMA RADIATION.
IF THIS BASE HADN'T BEEN IN JUPITER'S SHADOW, WE WOULD HAVE ALL BEEN FRIED AS WELL!

AN AMOUNT OF ENERGY BEYOND ALL IMAGINATION. WHAT ON EARTH HAPPENED?
EVEN IF WE WANTED TO FIND OUT, THE METEOR ITSELF HAS COMPLETELY VAPORIZED--ALONG WITH THE SAII 828 AND ITS TWO PASSENGERS
.....
COULD THE METEOR HAVE BEEN COMPOSED OF SOME UNKNOWN RADIOACTIVE MATTER? A COLLISION MIGHT HAVE CAUSED AN EXPLOSION IN THE SPACESHIP'S ATOMIC PILE, SETTING OFF A CHAIN REACTION.
ARE YOU SAYING THERE WAS A CHUNK OF ENRICHED URANIUM JUST FLOATING AROUND?! OUT OF THE QUESTION. BESIDES, THE ENERGY RELEASED WAS WAY BEYOND ANY NUCLEAR EXPLOSION.
COME ON! YOU'RE NOT GOING TO ACCEPT NUMBERS THAT HIGH--THE RADIATION MUST HAVE SCREWED UP THE COUNTER!
NUMBERS DON'T LIE!
1178...
EH?
IN 1178, A METEORITE STRUCK THE SURFACE OF THE MOON, CAUSING A TREMENDOUS EXPLOSION...

...ACCORDING TO MEDIEVAL RECORDS, A HUGE PILLAR OF FLAME COULD BE CLEARLY SEEN FROM THE EARTH. THE ENTIRE MOON CONVULSED
A METEORITE COLLISION POWERFUL ENOUGH TO SHAKE THE MOON...
MORE RECENTLY, THERE'S THE CASE OF THE TUNGUS METEORITE IN SIBERIA... 1908.
...THIS TIME THE METEOR FELL TO EARTH. THE IMPACT WAS REPORTED TO BE HUGE, BUT, STRANGELY, NO CRATER WAS FOUND
IT APPARENTLY REACTED DIRECTLY WITH THE EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE, EXPLODING IN MIDAIR
NOTHING--- JUST GET ME AS MUCH DATA AS YOU CAN FROM THE COMPUTER
"I WANT FLYING COURSE, SPEED, ESTIMATED WEIGHT, AND COMPOSITION OF THE METEOR! EVERYTHING!
WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO...?
?
?

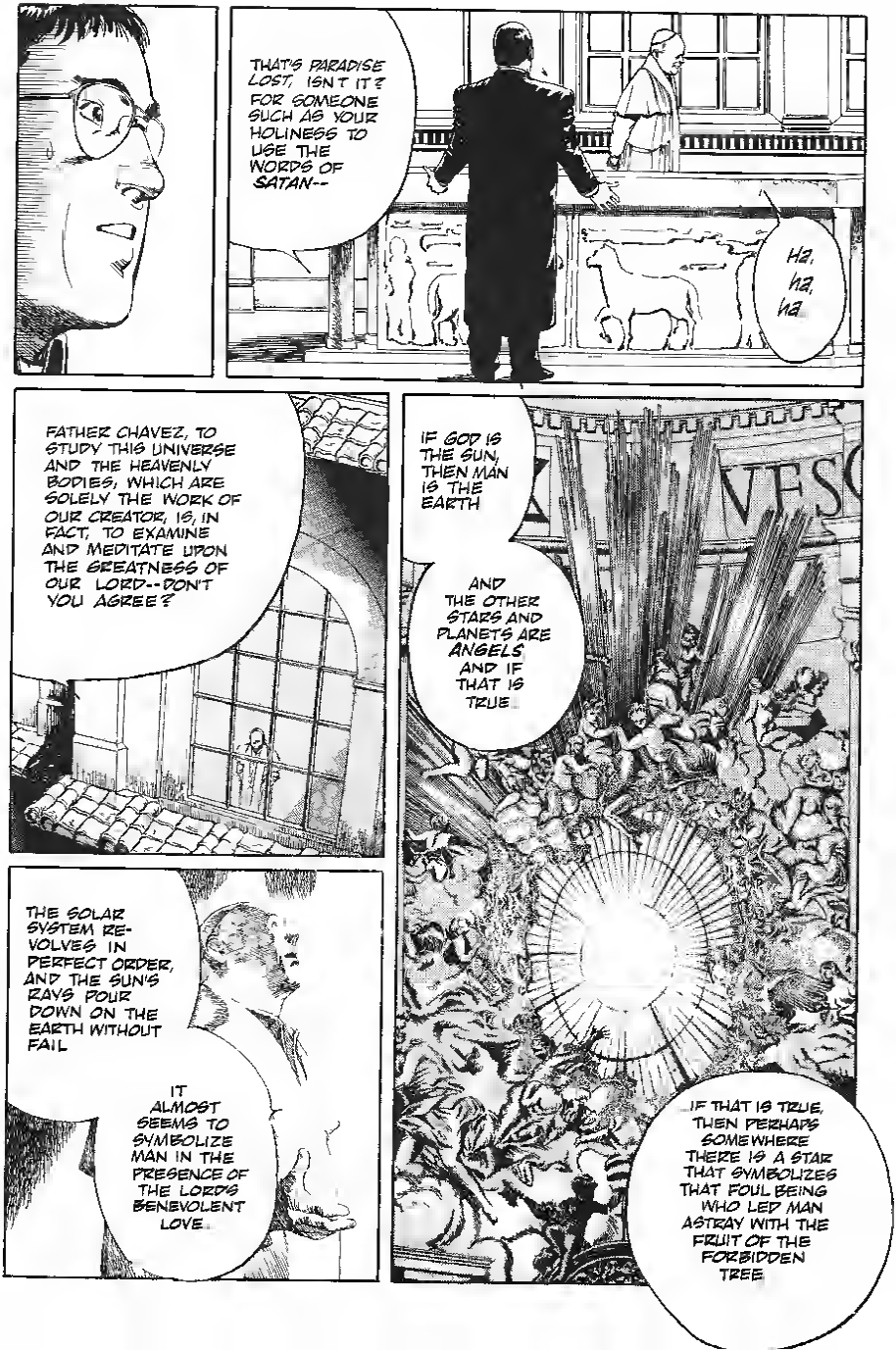

AH, THERE YOU ARE, RIU.
WOULD YOU HOOK UP AN EMERGENCY CIRCUIT TO EARTH? I HAVE TO NOTIFY THE FAMILIES OF THOSE TWO MEN.
I'M THE ONE WHO ORDERED THEM TO INVESTIGATE THAT METEOR...
YES, SIR...
...UM, DR. CLEAVER... JUST WHAT WAS THAT METEOR?
WE WON'T KNOW TIL WE CHECK IT OUT RIU
BUT IF IT WAS WHAT I'M THINKING..
...THEN I MIGHT AS WELL HAVE MURDERED THOSE TWO MEN IN COLD BLOOD..

SWAM

NI CAELORVM TV ES PETRVS
FATHER CHAVEZ...
THIS WAY PLEASE. HE HAS BEEN WAITING IN THE SPECIAL AUDIENCE CHAMBER.

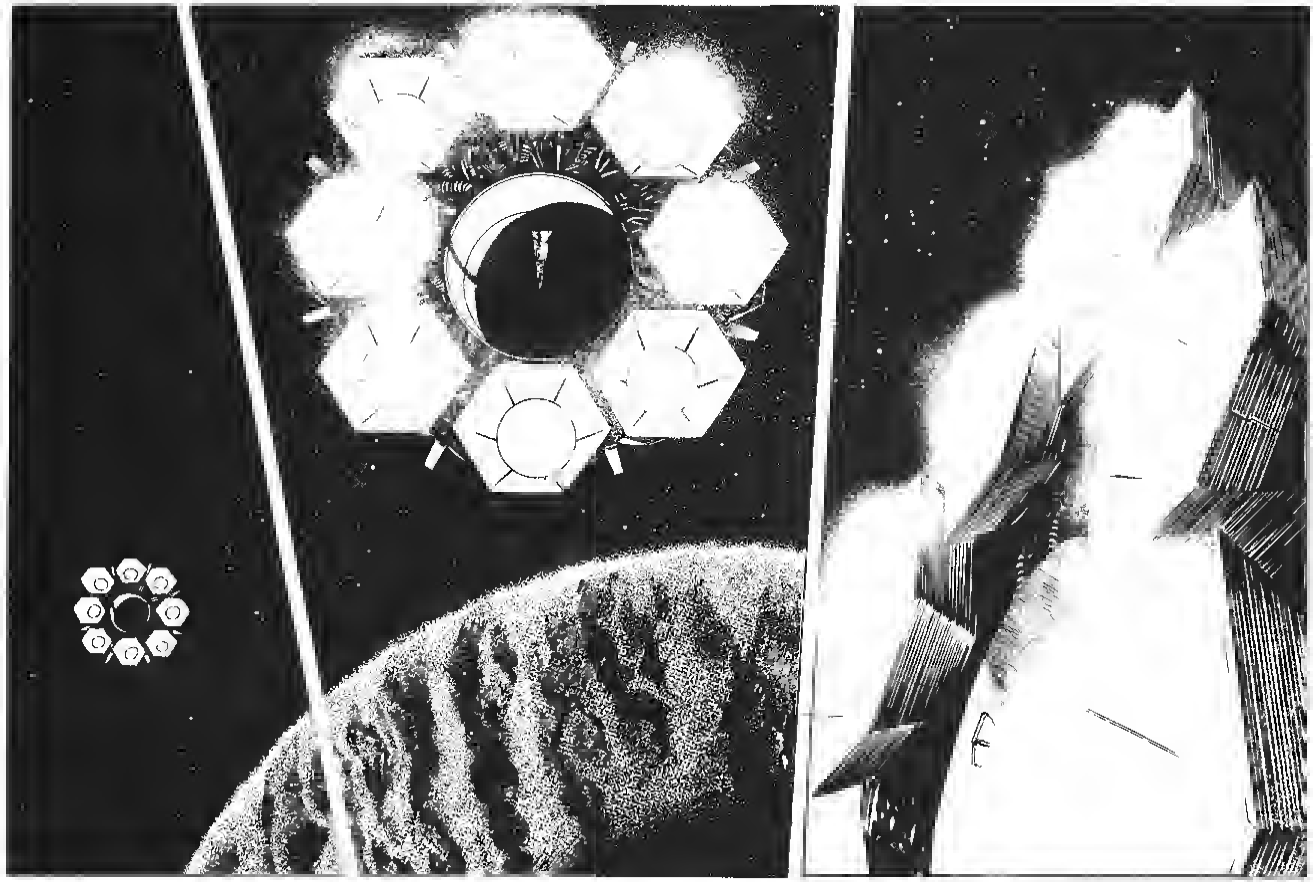
THANK YOU FOR COMING, FATHER CHAVEZ IM TRULY GRATEFUL
IVE HEARD MUCH ABOUT YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS AT THE VATICAN SCIENCE ACADEMY.
COMPARATIVE PLANETOLOGY-- IS THAT WHAT THEY CALL YOUR FIELD? A VERY IMPORTANT STUDY IN THIS AGE WHEN HUMANITY'S OUTPOSTS HAVE REACHED AS FAR AS JUPITER
YOU'RE VERY KIND
SINCE ADAM DISOBEYED GOD AND ATE OF THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE, THERE HAS BEEN NO LIMIT TO HUMANITY'S DESIRE FOR MORE.
I, TOO, AM GUILTY.
"KNOWLEDGE FORBIDDEN? SUSPICIOUS, REASONLESS.
"WHY SHOULD THEIR LORD ENVY THEM THAT? CAN IT BE SIN TO KNOW? CAN IT BE DEATH?"*

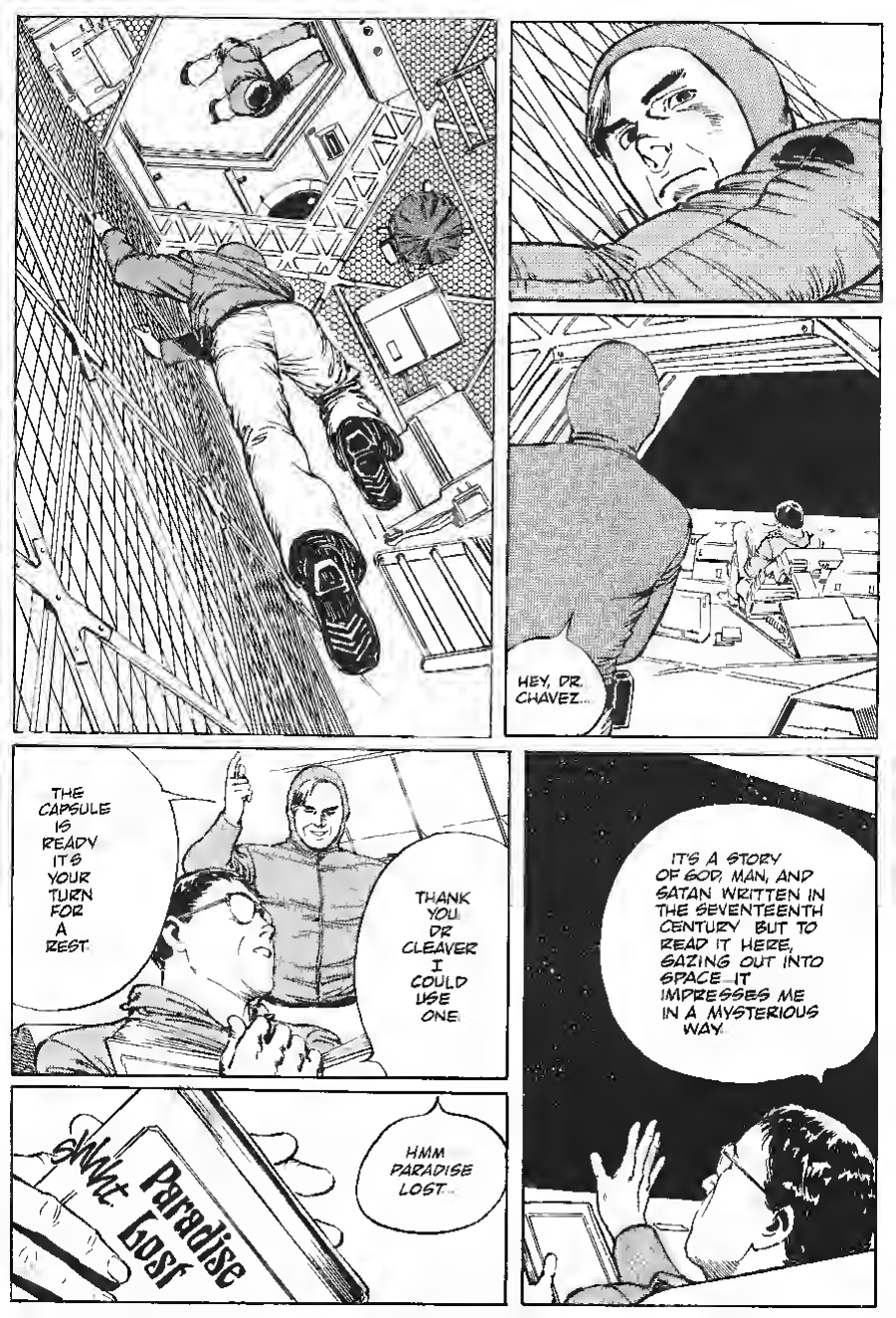
*JOHN MILTON, PARADISE LOST, BOOK IV, VERSES 515-518


THAT'S PARADISE LOST, ISN'T IT? FOR SOMEONE SUCH AS YOUR HOLINESS TO USE THE WORDS OF SATAN--
HA, HA, HA.
FATHER CHAVEZ, TO STUDY THIS UNIVERSE AND THE HEAVENLY BODIES, WHICH ARE SOLELY THE WORK OF OUR CREATOR, IS, IN FACT, TO EXAMINE AND MEDITATE UPON THE GREATNESS OF OUR LORD--DON'T YOU AGREE?
IF GOD IS THE SUN, THEN MAN IS THE EARTH
AND THE OTHER STARS AND PLANETS ARE ANGELS AND IF THAT IS TRUE...
THE SOLAR SYSTEM REVOLVES IN PERFECT ORDER, AND THE SUN'S RAYS POUR DOWN ON THE EARTH WITHOUT FAIL
IT ALMOST SEEMS TO SYMBOLIZE MAN IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD'S BENEVOLENT LOVE.
...IF THAT IS TRUE, THEN PERHAPS SOMEWHERE THERE IS A STAR THAT SYMBOLIZES THAT FOUL BEING WHO LED MAN ASTRAY WITH THE FRUIT OF THE FORBIDDEN TREE.

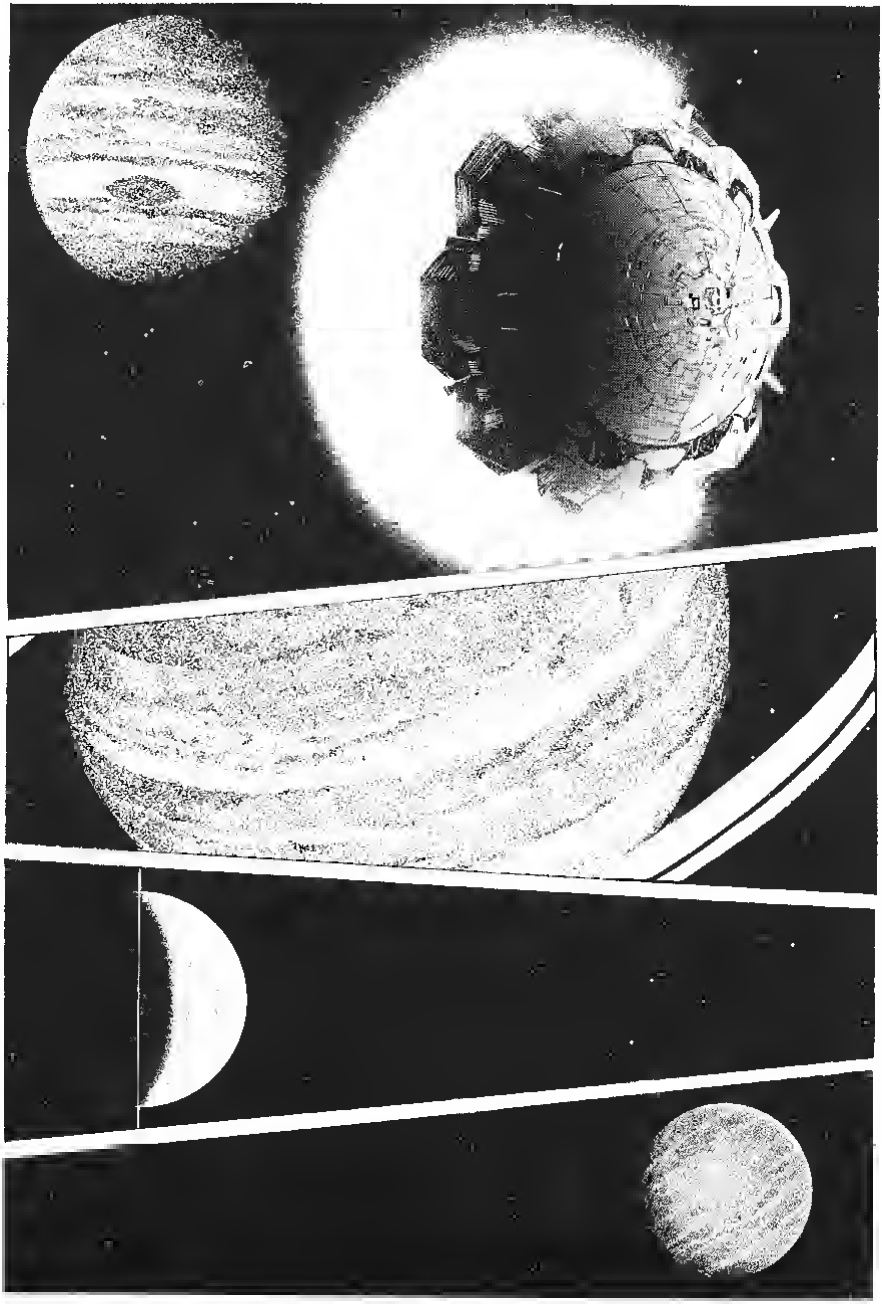
FATHER CHAVEZ...
THE CHURCH DOES NOT HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THOSE PEOPLE WHO [illegible] FLAPPING THEIR WINGS.
BUT THE ORIGINAL SIN COMMITTED BY MAN VIA THE SERPENT'S TEMPTATION IS A GRIM REALITY. WE CANNOT ESCAPE IT, EVEN IN SPACE.
WE MUST REMIND THOSE WHO HAVE FORGOTTEN WE MUST OFFER CONCRETE EVIDENCE THAT IS PLAIN TO THE EYE.
YOUR HOLINESS, WHY HAVE I BEEN SUMMONED...?

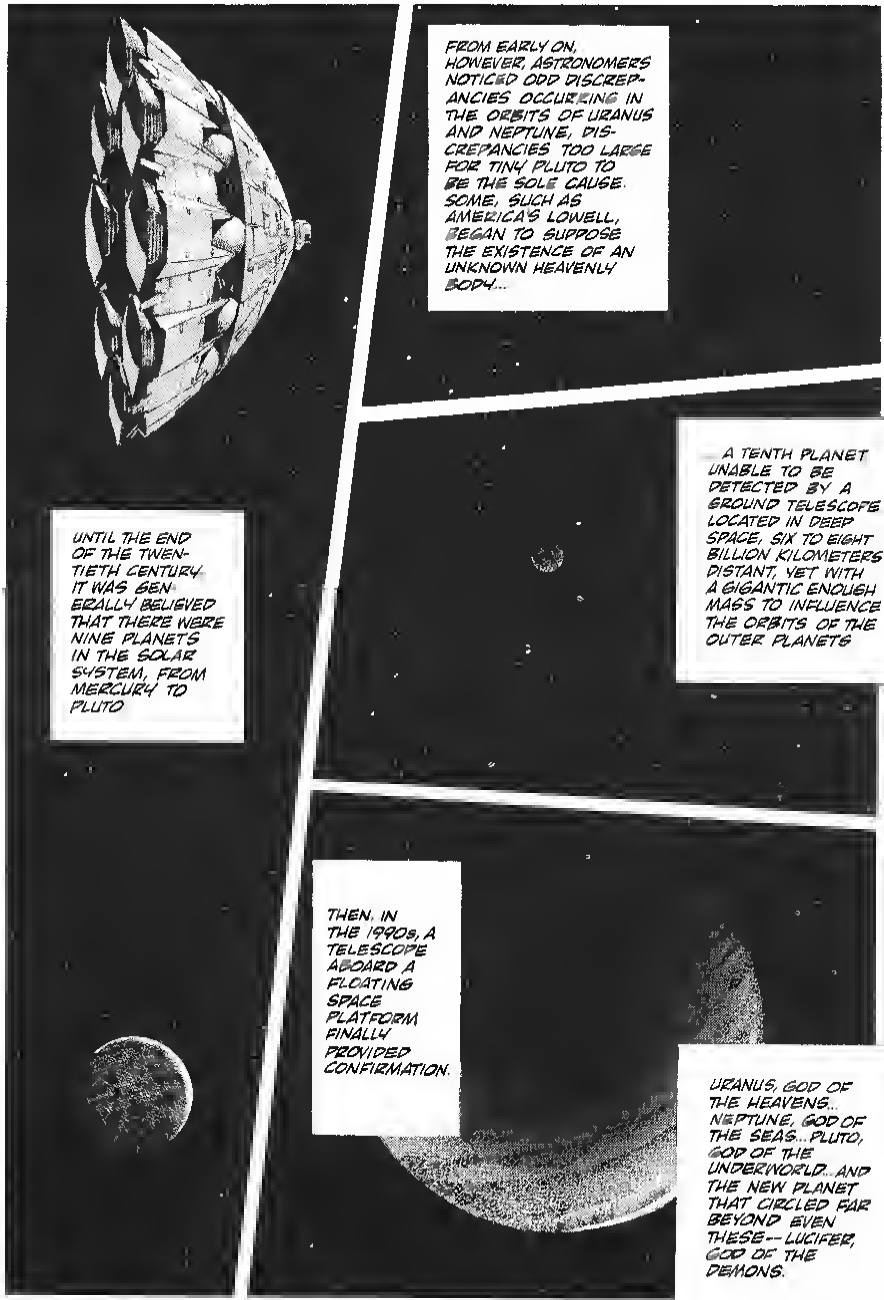
RAMON, MY SON... I WANT YOU TO RIDE IN A SPACESHIP.
I WANT YOU TO INVESTIGATE "LUCIFER."
YOU WILL BE JUST LIKE THE MISSIONARIES WHO TRAVELED TO THE FAR ENDS OF THE EARTH. BUT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF YOUR VOYAGE IS FAR GREATER.
IN A SENSE, IT IS A TRIP TO MEET ORIGINAL SIN.
LUCIFER...!

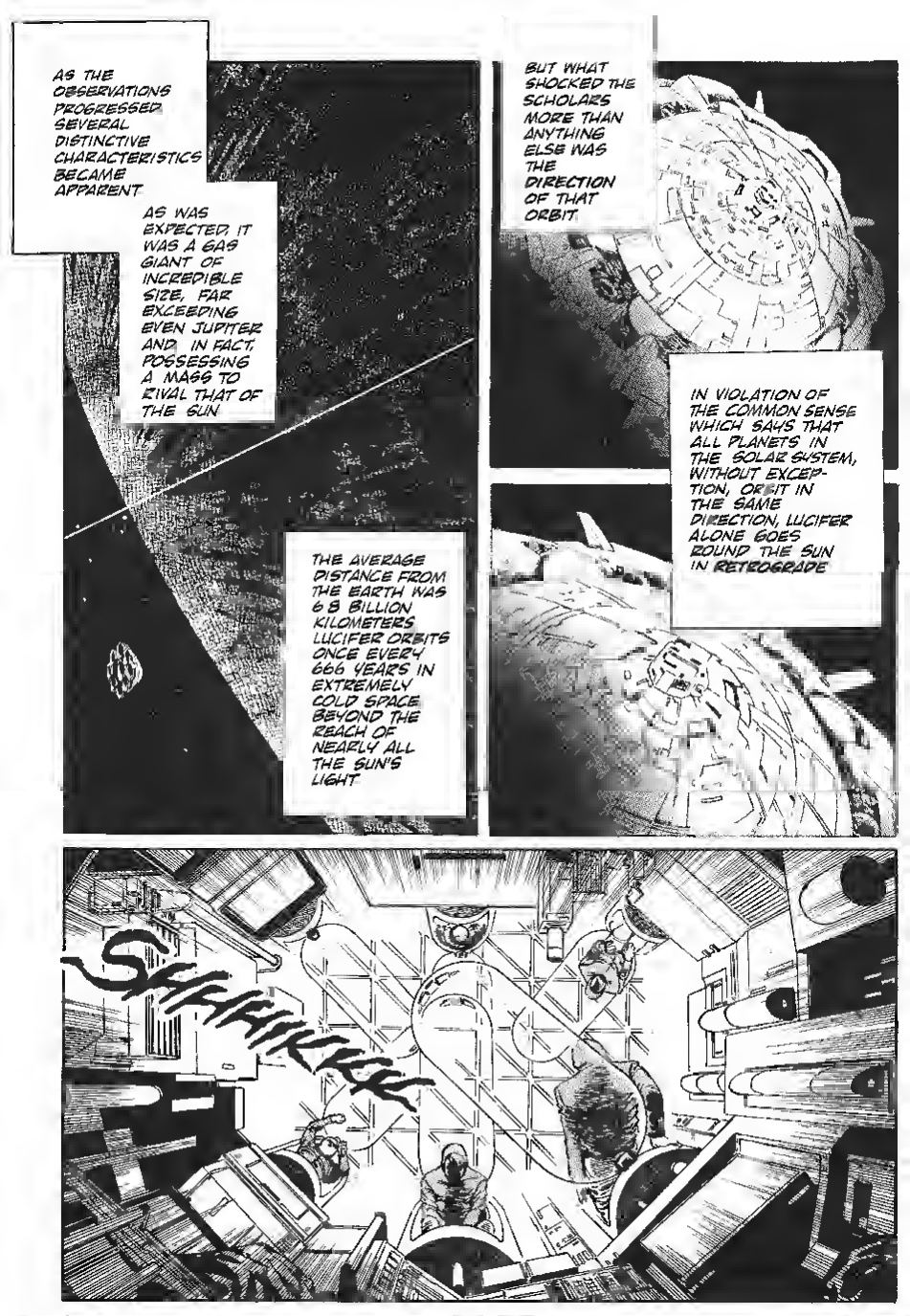



HEY, DR. CHAVEZ...
THE CAPSULE IS READY IT'S YOUR TURN FOR A REST.
THANK YOU, DR CLEAVER I COULD USE ONE.
IT'S A STORY OF GOD, MAN, AND SATAN WRITTEN IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. BUT TO READ IT HERE, GAZING OUT INTO SPACE—IT IMPRESSES ME IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY.
HMM PARADISE LOST...
Paradise Lost

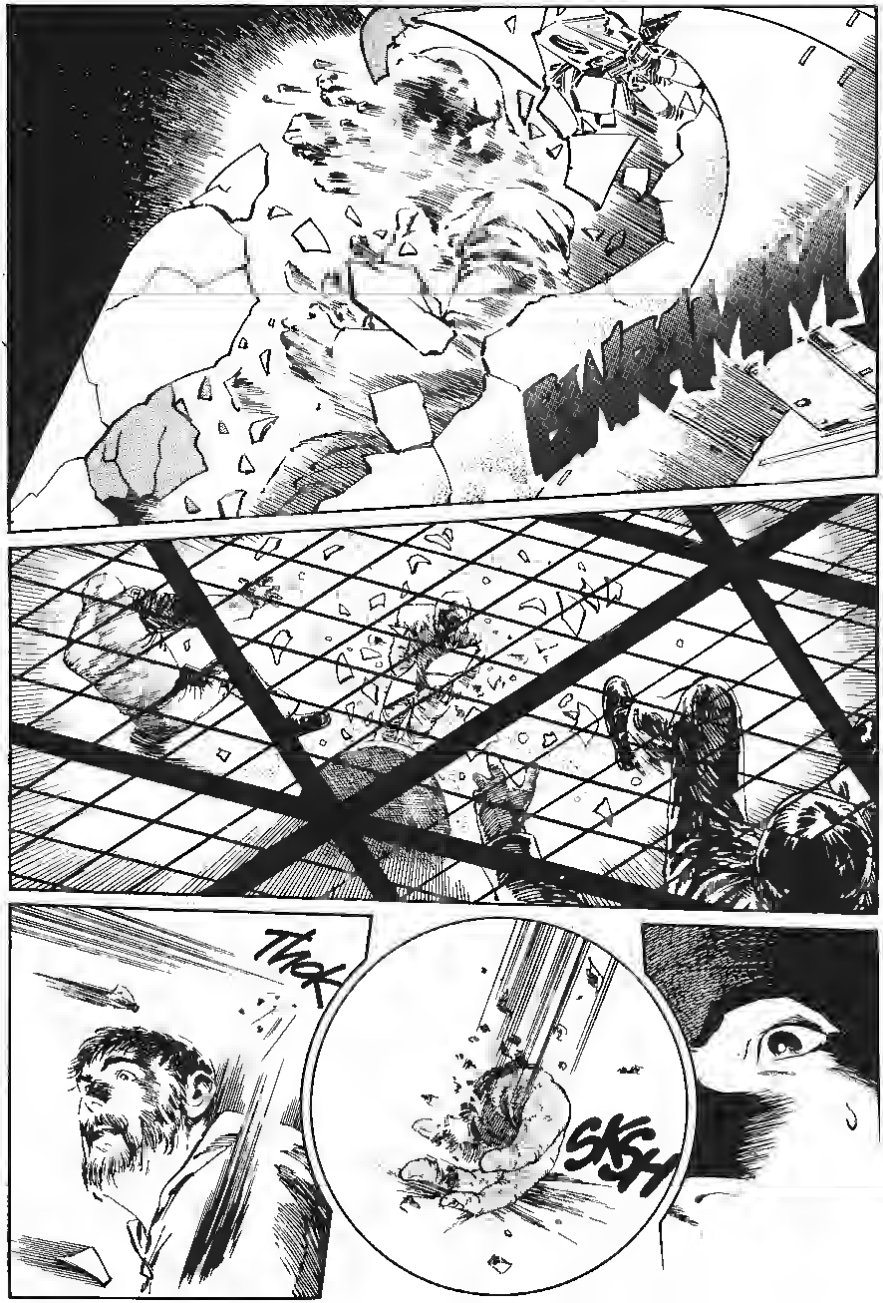
THE VASTNESS OF SPACE CAUSES PEOPLE TO THINK ABOUT MANY THINGS.
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, DR CHAVEZ, THE FACT THAT YOU'RE ALSO A THEOLOGIAN, AN ORDAINED PRIEST...
...AND WHAT WITH THE VATICAN FINANCING THIRTY PERCENT OF THIS MISSION, WELL... I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT, IF YOU DON'T MIND.
UNFORTUNATELY, THERE ISN'T MUCH TIME FOR ME TO EXPLAIN.
I WOULDN'T MIND KNOWING WHY YOU PROMOTED THIS PROJECT SO STRONGLY TOO, DR. CLEAVER.
MAYBE LATER, DR. CHAVEZ. NOW INHALE THE GAS AND RELAX...
...AND WHEN WE ARRIVE AT OUR DESTINATION, I'D LIKE TO HAVE A GOOD TALK.
DID MILTON WRITE THAT AS WELL, DR CHAVEZ?
CERTAINLY...
...ULTIMATELY, SCIENCE AND RELIGION SHOULD BE... CONNECTED
IT WAS... EINSTEIN
SHRIEK




FROM EARLY ON, HOWEVER, ASTRONOMERS NOTICED ODD DISCREPANCIES OCCURRING IN THE ORBITS OF URANUS AND NEPTUNE, DISCREPANCIES TOO LARGE FOR TINY PLUTO TO BE THE SOLE CAUSE. SOME, SUCH AS AMERICA'S LOWELL, BEGAN TO SUPPOSE THE EXISTENCE OF AN UNKNOWN HEAVENLY BODY...
UNTIL THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, IT WAS GENERALLY BELIEVED THAT THERE WERE NINE PLANETS IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM, FROM MERCURY TO PLUTO
...A TENTH PLANET UNABLE TO BE DETECTED BY A GROUND TELESCOPE LOCATED IN DEEP SPACE, SIX TO EIGHT BILLION KILOMETERS DISTANT, YET WITH A GIGANTIC ENOUGH MASS TO INFLUENCE THE ORBITS OF THE OUTER PLANETS
THEN, IN THE 1990s, A TELESCOPE ABOARD A FLOATING SPACE PLATFORM FINALLY PROVIDED CONFIRMATION.
URANUS, GOD OF THE HEAVENS... NEPTUNE, GOD OF THE SEAS... PLUTO, GOD OF THE UNDERWORLD... AND THE NEW PLANET THAT CIRCLED FAR BEYOND EVEN THESE-- LUCIFER, GOD OF THE DEMONS.

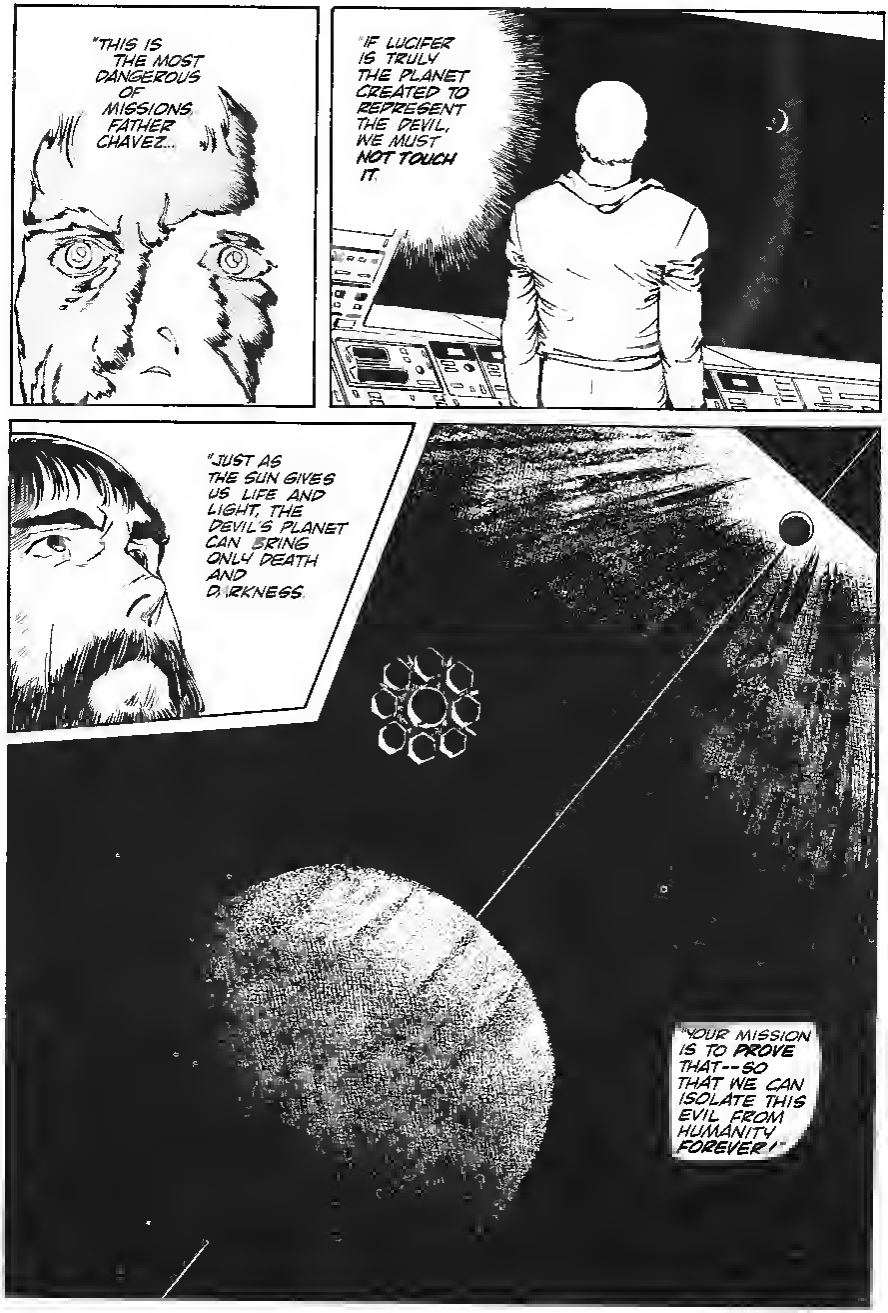

AS THE OBSERVATIONS PROGRESSED SEVERAL DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS BECAME APPARENT
AS WAS EXPECTED, IT WAS A GAS GIANT OF INCREDIBLE SIZE, FAR EXCEEDING EVEN JUPITER AND, IN FACT, POSSESSING A MASS TO RIVAL THAT OF THE SUN
THE AVERAGE DISTANCE FROM THE EARTH WAS 6.8 BILLION KILOMETERS LUCIFER ORBITS ONCE EVERY 666 YEARS IN EXTREMELY COLD SPACE BEYOND THE REACH OF NEARLY ALL THE SUN'S LIGHT
BUT WHAT SHOCKED THE SCHOLARS MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE WAS THE DIRECTION OF THAT ORBIT
IN VIOLATION OF THE COMMON SENSE WHICH SAYS THAT ALL PLANETS IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM, WITHOUT EXCEPTION, ORBIT IN THE SAME DIRECTION, LUCIFER ALONE GOES ROUND THE SUN IN RETROGRADE
SKRRRRRRK

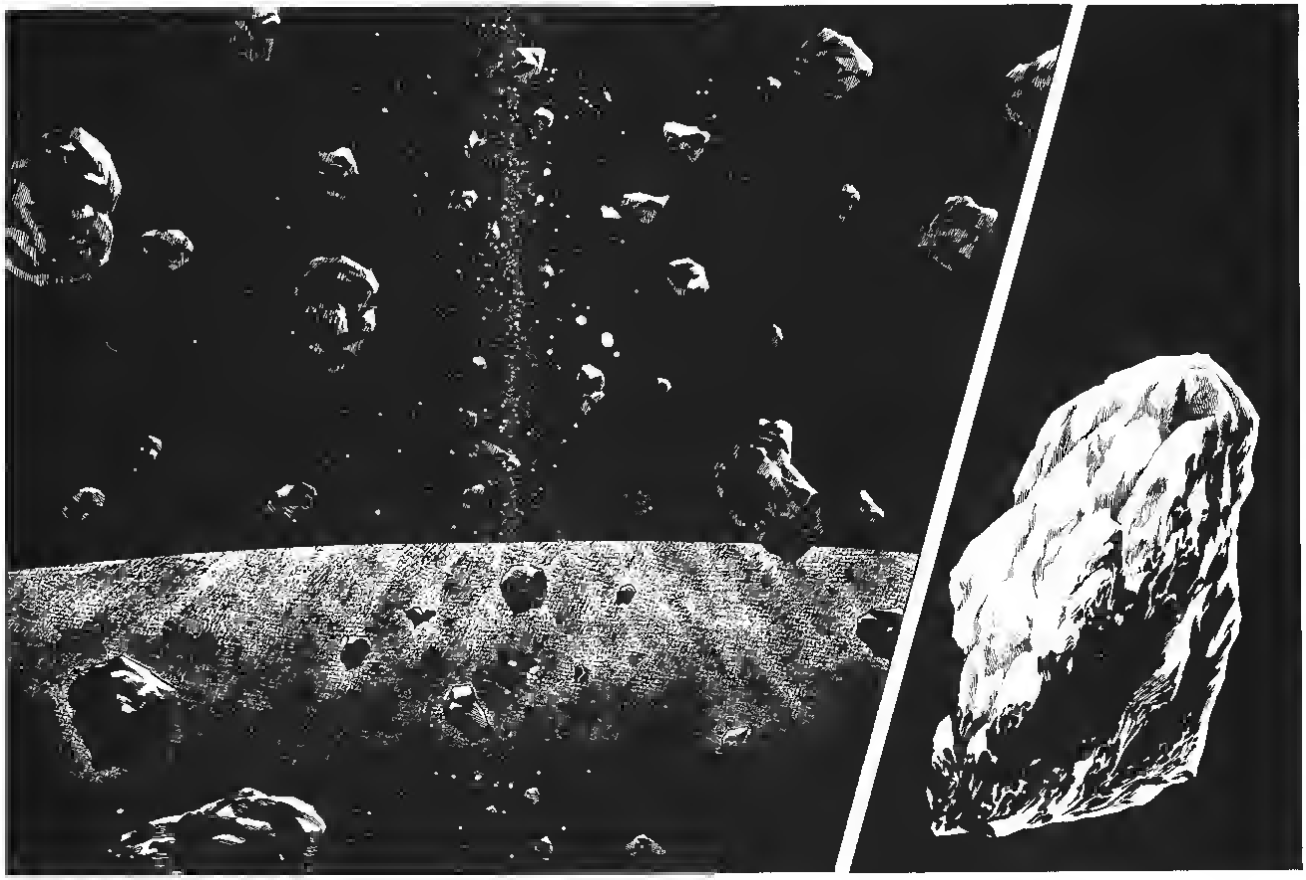
HAVE--HAVE WE ALREADY REACHED LUCIFER? DR CLEAVER, HAVE WE BEEN SLEEPING FOR SEVEN YEARS?
LET'S GO HAVE A LOOK. WE'RE THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS TO SEE IT WITH THE NAKED EYE.
TEARS COME TO YOUR EYES, DON'T THEY, DR. CHAVEZ ?
HAPPENS TO EVERYONE FOR SOME REASON, WHEN PEOPLE AWAKE FROM HIBERNATION CAPSULES, THEY CRY.
DR. CLEAVER !
WHO IS IT?
TECHNICAL OFFICER UHURU. THE TEMPERATURE'S TOO LOW. AT THIS RATE, REVIVIFICATION IS--LOOK! THE GAS PRESSURE IS--
CHK
GET DOWN !

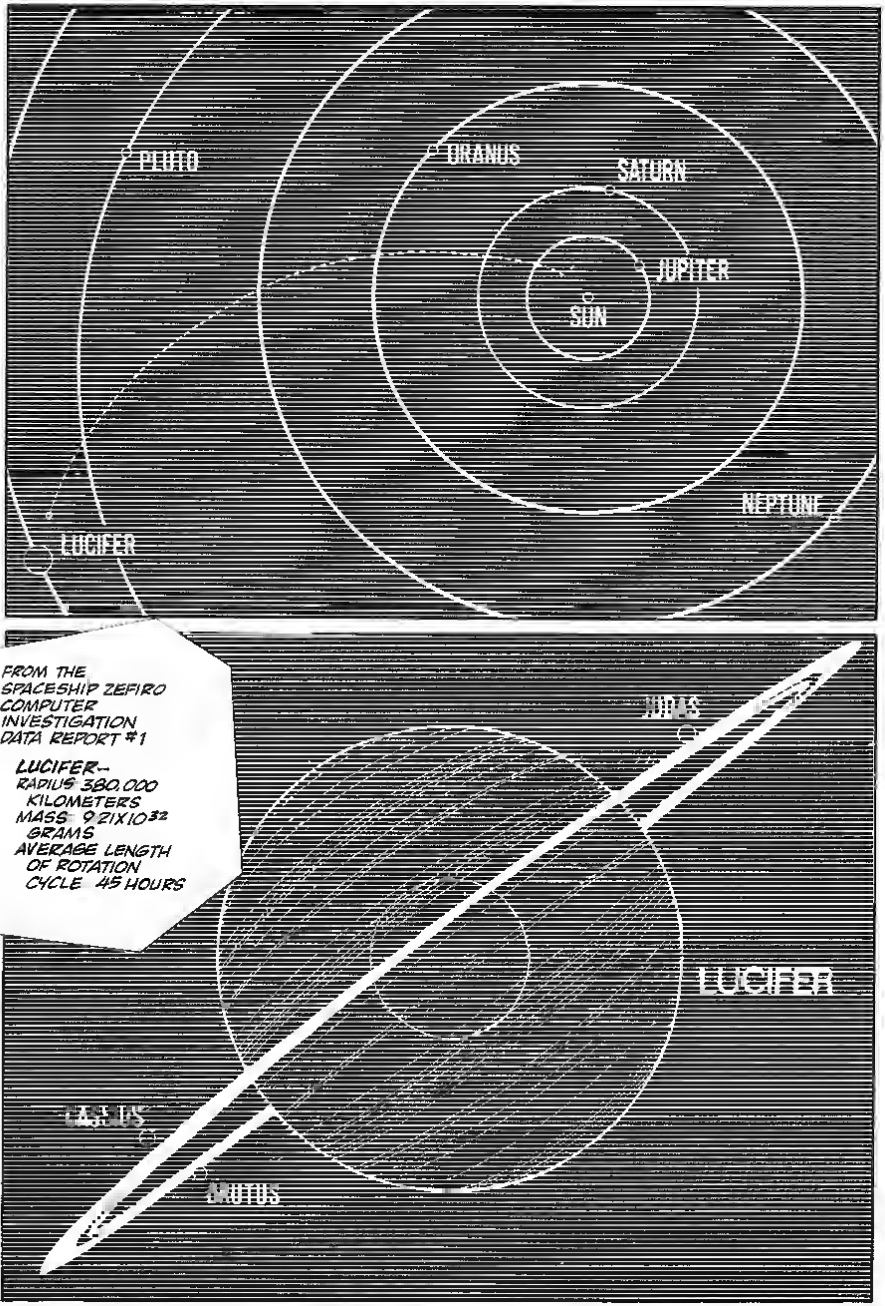

BANG-WWM
THUK
SKSH

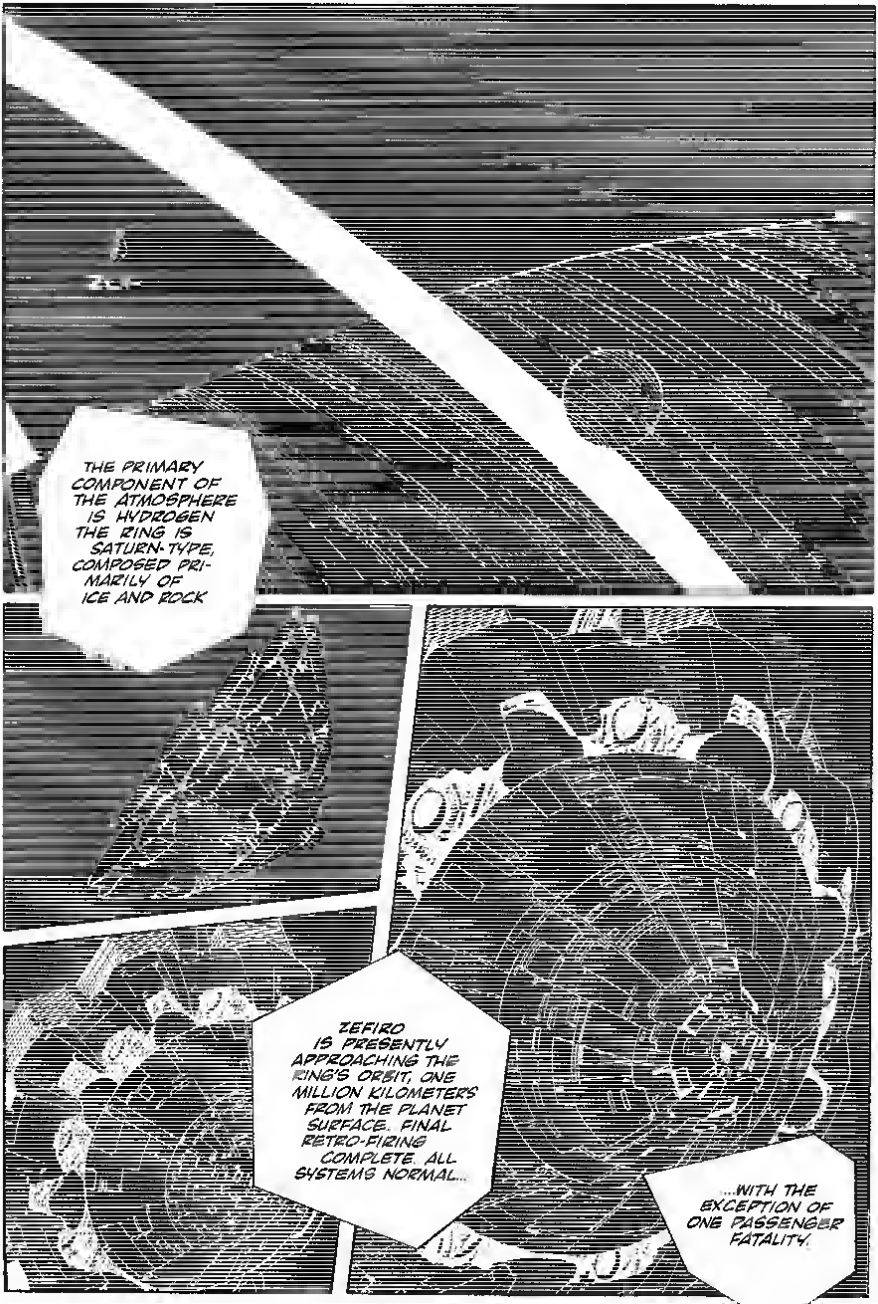
THWK
GAHHH!
CHAA
CHK

ARE YOU SAYING THE COMPUTER'S ENTIRE SAFETY CONTROL SYSTEM WAS SOMEHOW SABOTAGED?
I JUST DID A QUICK SCAN, BUT I'M AFRAID SO.
THE WARNING CIRCUITS OF THE MONITOR SYSTEM, WHICH SHOULD HAVE CAUGHT THE TEMPERATURE AND PRESSURE PROBLEMS WERE SKILLFULLY CUT SOMEWHERE BEFOREHAND
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? EXPLAIN IN PLAIN LANGUAGE.
I'M SAYING THAT SOMEONE TAMPERED WITH THE COMPUTER.
SOMEONE PURPOSEFULLY MURDERED UHURU!

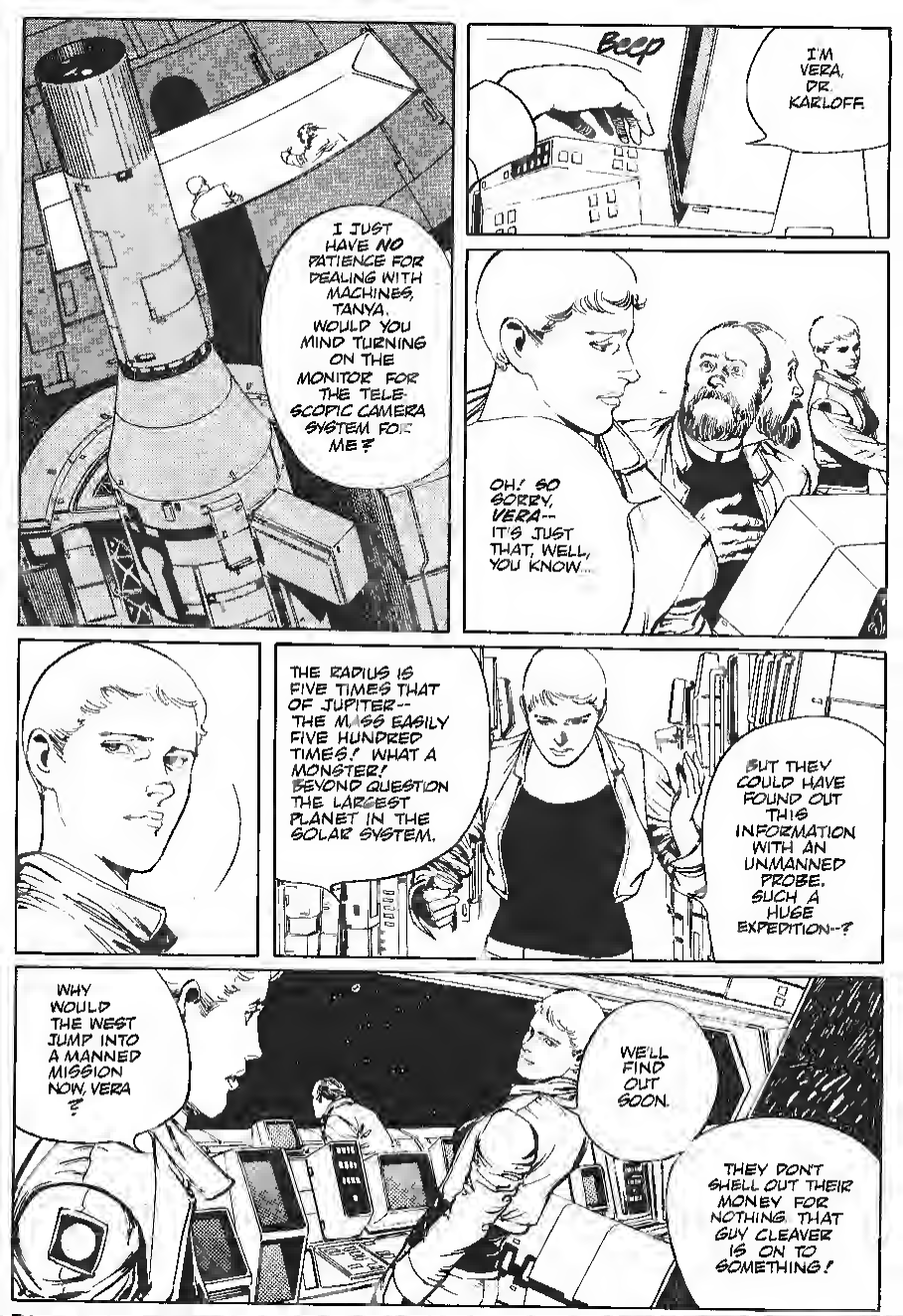

"THIS IS THE MOST DANGEROUS OF MISSIONS, FATHER CHAVEZ...
"IF LUCIFER IS TRULY THE PLANET CREATED TO REPRESENT THE DEVIL, WE MUST NOT TOUCH IT.
"JUST AS THE SUN GIVES US LIFE AND LIGHT, THE DEVIL'S PLANET CAN BRING ONLY DEATH AND DARKNESS.
"YOUR MISSION IS TO PROVE THAT--SO THAT WE CAN ISOLATE THIS EVIL FROM HUMANITY FOREVER!"

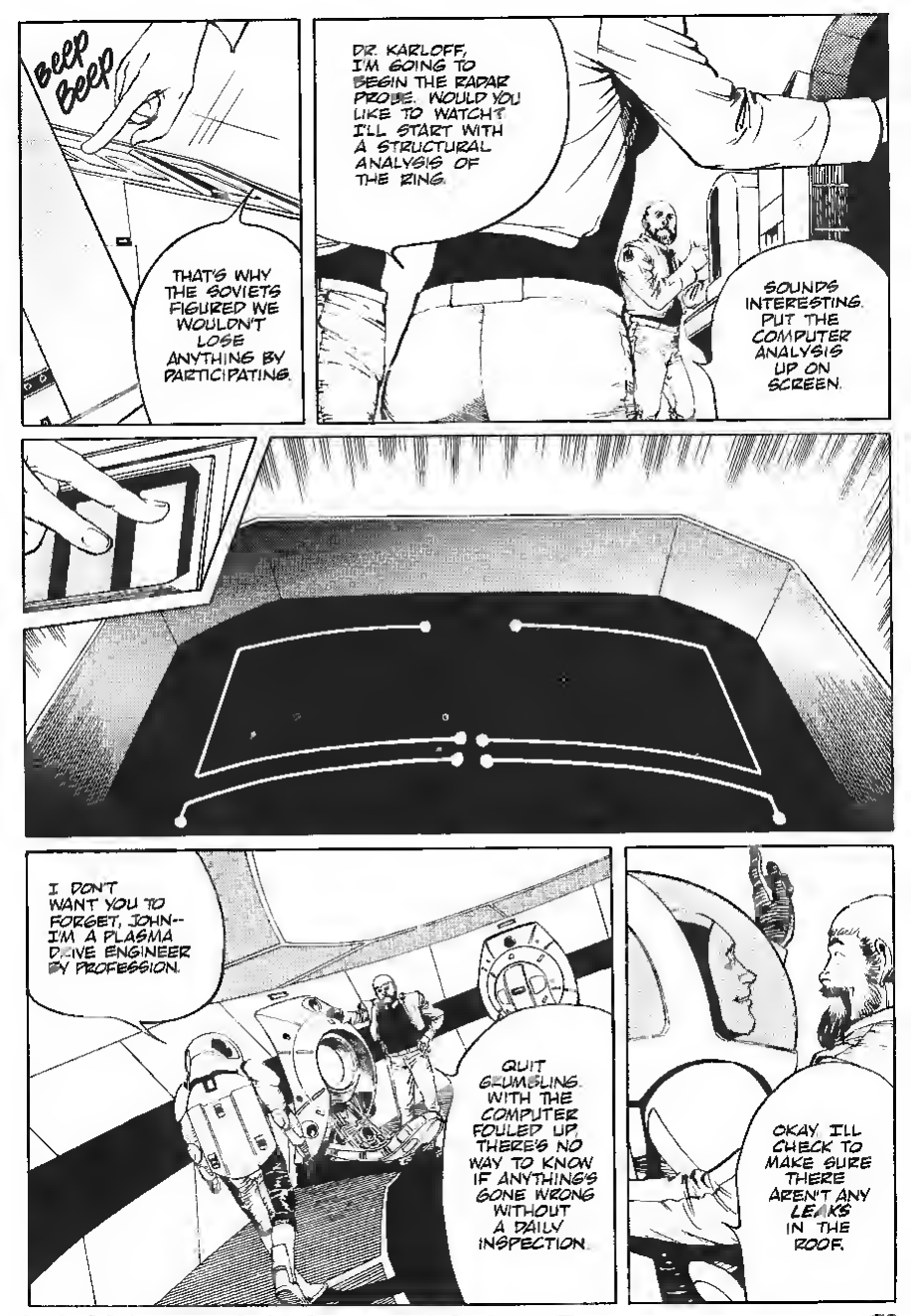


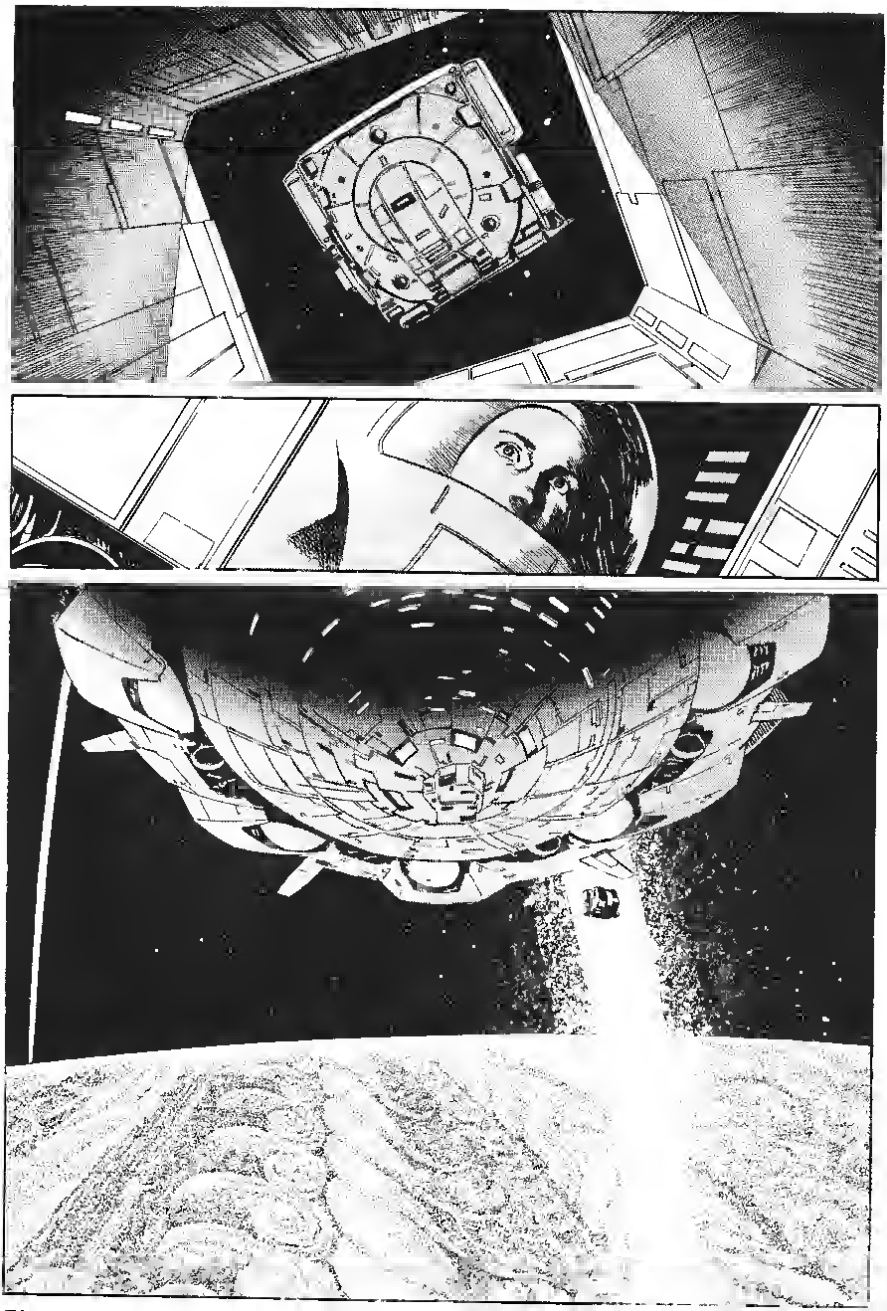

PLUTO
URANUS
SATURN
JUPITER
SUN
NEPTUNE
LUCIFER
FROM THE SPACESHIP ZEFIRO COMPUTER INVESTIGATION DATA REPORT #1
LUCIFER--
RADIUS 380,000 KILOMETERS
MASS 9.21X10^32 GRAMS
AVERAGE LENGTH OF ROTATION CYCLE 45 HOURS
JUDAS
LUCIFER
BRUTUS


THE PRIMARY COMPONENT OF THE ATMOSPHERE IS HYDROGEN THE RING IS SATURN-TYPE, COMPOSED PRIMARILY OF ICE AND ROCK
ZEFIRO IS PRESENTLY APPROACHING THE RING'S ORBIT, ONE MILLION KILOMETERS FROM THE PLANET SURFACE. FINAL RETRO-FIRING COMPLETE. ALL SYSTEMS NORMAL...
...WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ONE PASSENGER FATALITY.

NOT HAVING ANY LUCK, CHRIS?
I GIVE UP.
IT WAS SO SKILLFULLY DONE... IT LOOKS LIKE IT'LL TAKE A FULL TWO MONTHS JUST TO FIND THE ALTERED CIRCUITS.
SO, WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
IT'S ONLY THE MONITORING FUNCTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN DAMAGED, BUT FOR NOW WE WON'T BE ABLE TO DO A COMPLETE CHECK OF THE SHIP FOR PROBLEMS--
--PLUS, IT DOESN'T THINK ANYTHING IS WRONG WITH ITSELF. WE'LL JUST HAVE TO FACE ANY EMERGENCIES WITHOUT WARNING.
ANY HUNCHES ABOUT WHO OUR BELOVED CULPRIT MAY BE?
.....
THE WORK COULD ONLY HAVE BEEN DONE AFTER WE LEFT JUPITER'S ORBIT. I DON'T KNOW WHO IT IS, BUT THE BASTARD'S STILL ON THE SHIP
WELL, THAT'S COMFORTING NEWS, ISN'T IT?


I JUST HAVE NO PATIENCE FOR DEALING WITH MACHINES, TANYA. WOULD YOU MIND TURNING ON THE MONITOR FOR THE TELESCOPIC CAMERA SYSTEM FOR ME?
Beep
I'M VERA, DR. KARLOFF.
OH! SO SORRY, VERA-- IT'S JUST THAT, WELL, YOU KNOW...
THE RADIUS IS FIVE TIMES THAT OF JUPITER-- THE MASS EASILY FIVE HUNDRED TIMES! WHAT A MONSTER! BEYOND QUESTION THE LARGEST PLANET IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM.
BUT THEY COULD HAVE FOUND OUT THIS INFORMATION WITH AN UNMANNED PROBE. SUCH A HUGE EXPEDITION--?
WHY WOULD THE WEST JUMP INTO A MANNED MISSION NOW, VERA?
WE'LL FIND OUT SOON.
THEY DON'T SHELL OUT THEIR MONEY FOR NOTHING. THAT GUY CLEAVER IS ON TO SOMETHING!

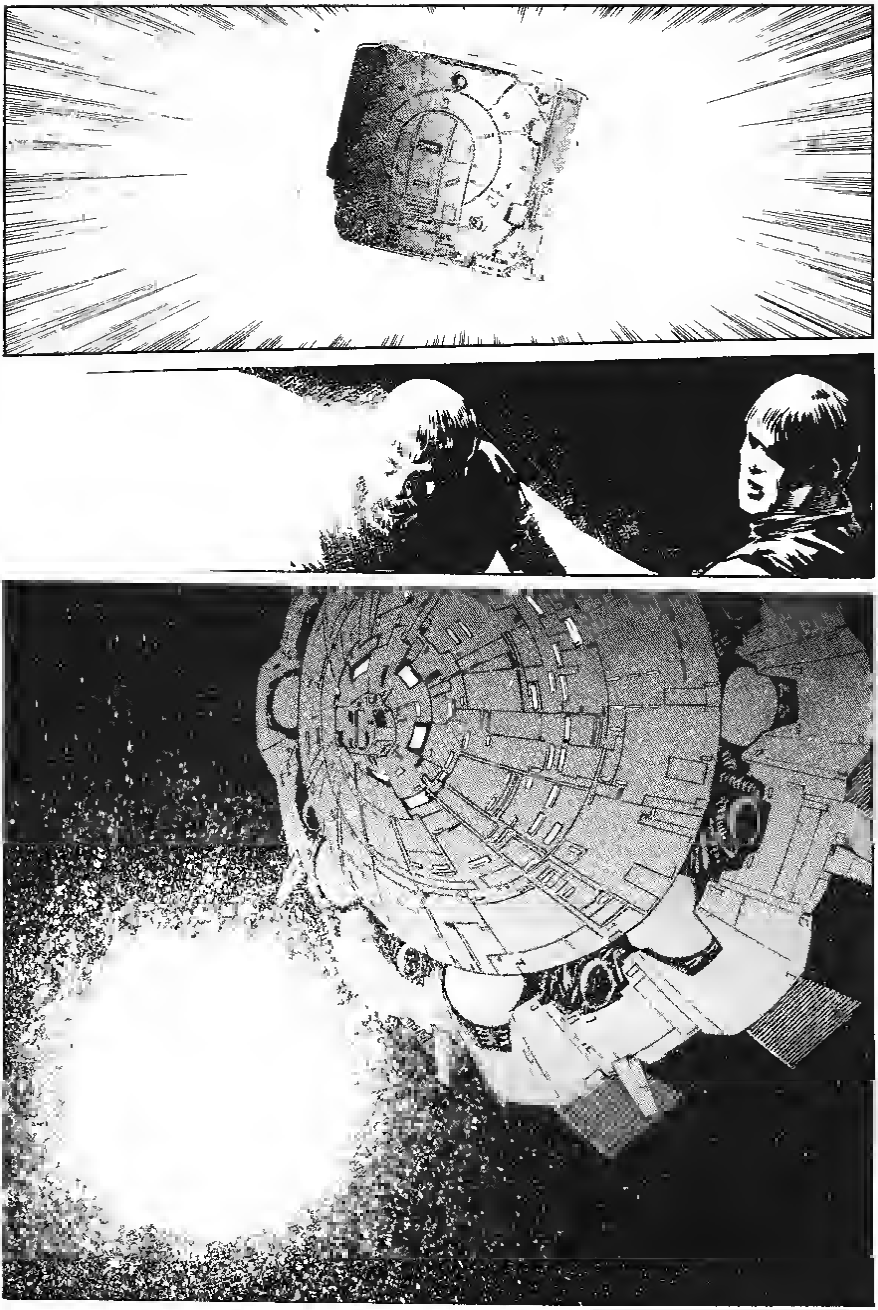

BEEP BEEP
THAT'S WHY THE SOVIETS FIGURED WE WOULDN'T LOSE ANYTHING BY PARTICIPATING.
DR. KARLOFF, I'M GOING TO BEGIN THE RADAR PROBE. WOULD YOU LIKE TO WATCH? I'LL START WITH A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE RING.
SOUNDS INTERESTING. PUT THE COMPUTER ANALYSIS UP ON SCREEN.
I DON'T WANT YOU TO FORGET, JOHN-- I'M A PLASMA DRIVE ENGINEER BY PROFESSION.
QUIT GRUMBLING. WITH THE COMPUTER FOULED UP THERE'S NO WAY TO KNOW IF ANYTHING'S GONE WRONG WITHOUT A DAILY INSPECTION.
OKAY. I'LL CHECK TO MAKE SURE THERE AREN'T ANY LEAKS IN THE ROOF.



THE MORE I LOOK, THE MORE AMAZING THIS PLANET IS IT WOULD REALLY BE SOMETHING TO SEE IT FROM OUTSIDE THE SHIP.
OH, IT'S YOU!
IT'S OVERWHELMING...
IT CERTAINLY IS, FATHER SOMEHOW, IT'S DIFFE...ENT FROM OTHER PLANETS...
BY THE WAY AT UHURU'S SPACE BURIAL--YOUR, UM, PRAYER WAS GOOD I GUESS THAT'S TO BE EXPECTED
IT CAN BE CONVENIENT HAVING A PRIEST ON A SPACESHIP.
THANKS...
TOO BAD I CAN'T HAVE YOU PRAY FOR ME WHEN I DIE
UNFORTUNATELY, I JUST CONVERTED TO HINDUISM THE OTHER DAY-- RIGHT, MARK?
HA, HA, HA...

THERE'S LUCIFER, SPREAD OUT BEFORE OUR EYES, PLAIN AS DAY, RIGHT?
BUT LOOK, DR. CLEAVER...
...WHAT'S SHOWING ON THE RADAR MONITOR?
NOTHING-- THAT'S WHAT! THE RADAR ISN'T RESPONDING TO THAT HUGE PLANET AT ALL!
DR. CLEAVER, WEREN'T YOU EXPECTING THIS?
YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN THIS HOCUS-POCUS

I THINK IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU MADE CLEAR TO US WHAT THE REAL PURPOSE OF THE LUCIFER MISSION IS!
EVEN AT THIS PROXIMITY THERE'S NO RESPONSE IN THE RADAR...
THE ONLY EXPLANATION IS THAT THE ELECTRONS FROM THE RADAR WAVES ARE REACTING WITH THE MATTER ON LUCIFER AND BEING EXTINGUISHED...
--THE ELECTRONS AND POSITRONS ARE CANCELLING EACH OTHER OUT!
CANCELLING EACH OTHER OUT?!
A GRAIN OF ICE! IF IT DRIFTED FROM THE RING IT'LL MAKE A PERFECT SAMPLE!



Night 7: To be continued